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RUTH PEABODY HARNDEN

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BRIGHT STAR OR DARK

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Dedicated to

EDWARD WARREN HARNDEN

and

ALICE GOLDTHWAITE HARNDEN





"—this tragic place
Where good and evil wear one face,
And only the true seer can find
The bright star or the dark behind
The mask of beauty that all wear."

"Æ"





Bright Star or Dark



Chapter One

On the death of their parents, Gerald Blake had assumed responsibility for his young sister in much the same spirit in which he might have undertaken guardianship of the elements. To King herself it had been a wry joke. "How," she had written to him in America, now five years since, "could the witless dears have so grossly miscalculated? Seniority, to be sure, and sex superiority, I suppose!" She had underscored the latter. "Which only goes to show," she had continued unnecessarily, "the fallacy of all precepts."

It was ten years since he had married and left Dublin. King had been a solemn, precocious kid turning up for holidays from her school in Germany. She had still to grow up to her face; only her astonishing mind had distinguished her even then. He remembered how he had tried to talk to her about her studies. "I don't have to study," she had told him, and it appeared to be quite true. He had asked her, then, about her friends. "I don't have friends," was her answer to that. "You don't have to make conversation," she had said finally. "No one else bothers."

He supposed that his efforts had been clumsy, but she had certainly been a confounding child with her extraordinary mind, her terrible independence. Matters had somewhat improved as she grew up. Actually she had not changed, but as an adult she was more intelligible, and their relationship, conducted largely by letter, had become increasingly companionable. He had seen her at intervals in recent years and enjoyed her considerably. But he had never fooled himself into believing that her adjustment was more than superficial. She was too brilliant, too restless, and too reckless for anyone's good.

But, "Would you say so?" Helen had once asked. It was during one of their visits to Dublin and they were attending a point-to-point that King had entered. As usual, everyone was watching her. "God, she's a reckless devil," someone had said with obvious admiration. Gerald's wife had turned then. "Would you say so?" she had asked mildly, so mildly that for a minute all attention was turned on her.

"Doesn't that imply—well, carelessness, perhaps? I should say Kingsley always knows exactly what she is doing."

Helen never called her King.

"That's ruthless, more, isn't it?" she had finished, still too quietly.

Gerald had been torn between annoyance and admiration. She was so right it took his breath away. But she

ought not to have said it, especially in that way that could disarm no one.

Helen had more than once accused him of being "different" with King. He knew what she meant and was even a little afraid of it in himself. He should have been able to be more firm with her. He shouldn't always have seen her point so well. But then, in one way, and that was perhaps the most troubling thing about it all, he did understand King. His own nature was not without some of the passion and inconstancy that he sensed so vividly in hers. He had even sometimes wondered whether it was a saving balance in himself which had turned him to the sanity of his work and his wife. Or whether it was not rather the death-wish of their inheritance, the final submission of a nature incapable of triumph.

In varying ways, he knew, the Irish were forever renouncing that which they had never possessed. Some did it with alcohol, and the sheltering monasteries of Ireland were filled with the results. Some did it more thoroughly, and Ireland had more insane than any civilized country in the world. Gerald, who had grown up in Dublin, who had not even been tempered by a foreign schooling, could not avoid this knowledge.

He had been thinking of all these things when he asked himself to Greystones to tea this afternoon when his grandmother was out. And now with the last scone eaten, he declined the dregs of the teapot and got to his feet.

"Mind if I smoke?" he asked.

"Darling!" His sister slumped further and flung one leg across the arm of her chair. "You're getting so bloody polite! You sound like a God-damned Englishman."

"And you sound like a Galway fishwife." His voice was light but there was a line between his eyes that had not been there the moment before.

"Reach me a cigarette." Kingsley held out a careless hand. "On the mantel beside you," she directed. "And then do get on with it." She shrugged in answer to his quick, inquiring glance.

"Clearly you've got the wind up about something." She paused while he held a match for her. "Or why so anxious to know if Granny was out?"

"Where'd you say she'd gone?" he temporized.

"Some do or other at the American Minister's. And so?" she prodded.

He went through one pocket after another, gave it up, and helped himself to a cigarette from the box on the mantel. Still standing he suddenly gave his whole attention to his sister.

"Why not come back to America with us?"

For a moment they looked at one another, and their two faces, with all expression briefly suspended, were remarkably alike. The resemblance was always there, strangely, people said, in faces so individually feminine and masculine. And yet, to the thoughtful observer there was a suggestion of softness in the man's face and

more than a suggestion of hardness in the girl's. Now they were simply two members of the same family who had inherited an identical, uncommon beauty, and at this moment were sharing an identical mood.

"Well!" Kingsley's face was the first to change and broke up into a grin that was partly surprise and partly amusement with a touch of mischief in the offing. The foot that hung over the arm of her chair began to swing.

"Man bites dog has nothing on this." She was laughing now.

Her brother scowled. "I don't see anything so funny about it."

"Then you're being particularly male and obtuse."

"By which you imply that there's some female shenanigan behind it?"

"Obviously." She was squinting at him now through the smoke from her dangling cigarette. It was a trick that annoyed him.

"For Heaven's sake, King!" His voice was sharp. "Leave Helen out. She has absolutely nothing to do with this."

"You mean she doesn't want me?" Her eyes widened with mock innocence.

"I mean nothing of the sort." The nervous exasperation in his voice seemed to emphasize his sister's whole composure. As if conscious of it he paused and began again in a quieter tone.

"Helen agrees with me completely."

Kingsley gathered herself and stood up, flinging her

half-smoked cigarette into the grate. She was nearly as tall as her brother, nearly as broad of shoulder, nearly as narrow-flanked. Hands against the mantelpiece, she leaned her face to the fire.

"I know, Jerry," she said quietly. "You'd never have asked me if she didn't. I'm just wondering why. That's what I'm talking about."

"You—you exaggerate, King." His voice was self-conscious now, edging away from a subject he usually managed to avoid. "Helen would like you if you gave her half a chance. You always get her on the raw, you know."

"Oh, I know, right enough," she picked up his words. "And so do you! It wouldn't matter what I did, so I may as well enjoy myself. You enjoy it, too, and that's what she can't bear. Just as she gets you all conventional and Yank, I come along and make you Irish again. Just as she gets you all to herself—"

"Stop it! Stop it, I tell you."

She stopped and raised her head in surprise to look at him. There was no softness in his face at this minute, and no beauty. It was like an ugly mask of anger, all the symmetry broken up in contorted muscles. His eyes, staring at her, seemed to cross in the intensity of their fixation. Watching him, King's face softened, changed as remarkably as his.

"Oh, Jerry! Jerry, I love you like that."

It was scarcely more than a whisper, and immediately she moved to stand beside him. "You could have been

so wonderful, Jerry," she said against his shoulder. "More wonderful than anyone else." Her fingers tightened on his arms. "I could have loved you—"

"King, you damned little fool!" He moved away from her with a thrust of his shoulders, his hands still rigid at his sides.

"You see," he said after a moment, "that's what I wanted to talk to you about. You've got to get out of this infernal country—" His speech was jerky, his voice tight in his throat. "It's insane—it's—"

"It's your country, too," she blazed back at him. "You're tarred with the same stick. You're one of the old sow's farrow! Why don't you look at me? You knew what I meant just now. You know it isn't impossible, or why did you—"

"Shut up! You must be mad. I tell you this place is morbid." He passed a nervous hand across his forehead and then, for an instant, let his eyes meet hers. "Even the horse show was disappointing this year," he said almost naturally. "Rain, rain, and more rain."

"For God sake, sit down," King interrupted his restless moving about the room. She had already dropped back into her chair and was looking, if possible, more casual than before. "The States have spoiled you," she told him. "Me, I'm not altogether sold on sunshine. Give me a soft day any time."

"Nice riding weather, too, isn't it?" He was looking at her now.

She sat a trifle straighter. "Meaning?" she demanded coldly.

"I've seen you in Phoenix Park with that fellow—"

She was sitting bolt upright all at once.

"Oh? Now we're getting somewhere. And where were you? In the bushes with your bird glasses, I suppose?" When he started to interrupt she raised her voice. "So Helen has nothing to do with it? Helen didn't decide, I suppose, that it was time to get me married off to some disgusting American with money?"

"You have odd notions of what's disgusting. A filthy German groom—"

"Really! And just where do you gather your singular information?"

"Look, King." He had lighted another cigarette from the first one but threw it into the fire, unsmoked, and sat down. He sat down carefully and without relaxing, on the edge of a straight-backed chair.

"There are lots of things," he began slowly, "I haven't liked in Dublin this summer. And I don't like the look of Europe. This wonderful economy that Germany is building—"

"I don't think you can tell me anything about Germany," she reminded him. "And if you think you can scare me into running out on a fight, then you have gone Yank! But I'm still Irish, thank God."

"That isn't quite the whole story," he said patiently. "What about your future? You've finished at the uni-

versity. You don't get on with Granny. What is there for you here?"

"You're forgetting, I'm still a 'Fellow of Trinity College'! I can go on indefinitely rolling up degrees at the expense of England. Don't you think I rather owe that to Ireland?"

"There you are," her brother said unhappily. "All these ancient animosities. It's all so morbid! It's one thing with Granny. She's given her life to the cause, and there *was* a cause in her time. It's a habit with her now. In any case, she's seventy years old. You're twenty-three, and this is the Irish Free State—God knows what it will be when the Germans get through with their 'peaceful penetration'—"

"Now you've said something!" King leapt to her feet and stood over her brother. "Things *are* happening in Ireland. It's not the past that counts now. There's a tremendous future here, and it's being born right now. God—" She gesticulated wildly.

"Then there is some truth in the rotten gossip about your politics and—" He broke off with a weary gesture.

"About my riding around Phoenix Park with a German groom?" she finished for him. "Did they tell you I sleep with him as well?"

It wasn't the words alone that offended him, but the expression that accompanied them. It was an expression that was strangely not as incongruous as it should have been on his sister's exquisite, aloof, and passionately proud face.

"But, Kingsley!" he said, futile with disgust, "a groom!"

"I don't know." She seemed to consider. The cigarette was hanging from her lips again and the grimace that it occasioned became a sort of leer. "There's something to be said for servants; they have to please."

He turned away from her. "Sorry to have wasted your afternoon," he said. "I'll be getting back to town."

She followed him into the hall. "Run me down," she said. "I'd like to pick up my mail at T.C.D." The only answer he made was to stand and wait, coat over his arm, until she had gathered her things.

Before starting the car he turned in his seat and looked at her. For a minute she thought he was going to make some final plea. For a minute he asked himself how he could ever have supposed that reason had anything to do with any action of King's. He should have known at the outset that argument was futile. He certainly wasn't going to make a further fool of himself by continuing it now. "A pity you're so damned good-looking," he said only.

It was impossible for anyone to look at Kingsley Blake and be entirely unaware of her beauty. Helen had said once, "She's so beautiful it doesn't matter," and he had known what she meant. So he had often felt, in the end, about any great and perfect aspect of beauty. The first pond lily he had ever picked had been one of exceptional size, and flawless as it seemed to him nothing had ever been flawless before. He had sat

holding it for a long time, filled with awe and elation. He had no idea how long it was before a sense of helplessness overcame him, before he was drained of everything but a numbing sense of futility in the face of this accomplishment, this finality which required nothing, which was complete. There was no contribution he could make but a sterile and exhausting admiration. When he dropped the flower back onto the surface of the water he knew it was the last he would ever pick.

Flawless was a word often used to describe King Blake's beauty. And there was something in it, for all the warmth of humanity, of the chilling power of perfection. It had no relation to desire. It might even make desire impossible, in the bewildering seizure upon the whole imagination.

"Quite," King agreed with him simply. "So unnecessary."

He accepted her acceptance of herself, her brilliance, her vitality, her whole breath-taking effectiveness which was entirely independent of her looks, which would have been equally great had she been ugly or even plain. "I'm an extravagance," she said. He knew it. Because of that, perhaps, it was inevitable that she should get into trouble. Ordinary life would be too narrow for her abilities, would expend too few of her energies. It might be, he considered, that there was some law like nature's abhorrence of a vacuum, which required that a certain proportion of all energy be spent. The pro-

portion might be fixed, but no one, not even the person himself, could know from what individual reservoir he drew. He started the car.

The afternoon's downpour had turned into that fine, invisible rainfall so characteristic of the country. Neither so slight as to be merely mist, nor assertive enough to be called rain, it was manifest only as an all-pervading moisture. The whole green countryside was fresh with it. Every tree and hedgerow and field had the soft, live look of moss under flowing water, and was unimaginably green. From broad fields on either side the road ran suddenly between high stone walls rank with ivy. The thick vines topped the wall and tangled with the branches of overhanging trees. It made of the road a long tunnel of foliage and the close, accumulated moisture cooled the air like the presence of a hidden river.

Gerald was not insensitive to the special charm of the Irish countryside. It could always put a spell on him, however reluctant he was to yield to it. He was going to speak of it now, but King anticipated him.

"It's a wonder the whole bloody country doesn't come out in mildew!"

It wasn't a long run into Dublin and there was never much travel. They were presently passing through the outskirts and King called his attention to the new workers' houses. "Ugly as hell," she conceded, "but functional, after a way. Everyone is yattering about the

beauty of the whitewashed cottage all of a sudden, but no one who ever lived in one, I'll wager."

It was quite true, he thought, that the cottage was the only pleasing architecture the country had developed. He had reflected more than once that it was astonishing in a land of such natural beauty to see so many examples of execrable taste. The Dublin shops appalled him. There was scarcely a house he knew whose furnishings were better than indifferently good. The Irish women dressed abominably. He spoke of these things to King.

"It's a damned poor country," she said. "And backwards. You'd have doubtless found the same things in New York a generation or more ago. Then, England set the styles—" She shrugged in eloquent dismissal. It always came back to that. After a minute he laughed shortly.

"Like it or not," he told her, "you're Granny all over again." It seemed to him true, but above all he preferred to believe it. That, for all its potential terrors, was at least a familiar pattern and seemed to him just now a safer preoccupation than the alien, foreboding future into which King threatened to rush.

"Hell to her soul," King answered him in the speech of the country, but there was humor behind the violence of the words. "And now," she said drolly, "if you'll just set me down at the gates of our Anglican stronghold—"

Chapter Two

"How did you happen to come to Ireland?"

John Payne had been in Dublin less than two weeks and had already been called upon to answer this question upon more occasions than he could count. He answered it sometimes gravely, and at altogether too great length, and again he passed it off almost with flippancy. It disconcerted him unnaturally because he was at once not accustomed to personal questions and all too prone to self-analysis.

"Surely you're not a chip off the old block?" He had been made conscious before now, too, that his appearance was conspicuous here. Even for an American he was tall. More than that, he was not able to analyze, but he dimly supposed it had something to do with his darkness. His grandfather had used to tease him about his seagoing New England forebears. "One of 'em went astray," he used to say with a wicked chuckle. "Somewhere in the Orient, I'd guess. And it's come out in you, Johnny." His mother had always protested that it was honest American Indian. "Look at his cheekbones," she would say, "and then watch him walk through the

woods!" He was quite unaware of walking in exactly the same manner along a city street, very straight-footed, and so lightly that leaves wouldn't have crackled if they'd been there. It gave to his whole long figure a distinct but entirely masculine grace.

"No," he said, now looking down into the wide gray eyes that were looking so serenely into his. "I'm a New Englander." He wondered every time he said it if it had any meaning for anyone else. To himself it was a concept so immense, so confused and intimate as to be beyond articulation. But it was as necessary to state as it was impossible to explain.

"Boston?" When he nodded she said, "Then you must feel at home in Dublin."

It was true that from the beginning it had not seemed alien to him. Yet the fact that it was actually strange was of the greater importance. If he could not tell even himself why he had chosen Ireland in particular, he knew with a growing assurance why it had had to be somewhere strange.

There was nowhere on the Continent where he could have gone with any sense of security in this uncertain autumn of nineteen-thirty-eight. And anywhere else in the British Isles he had visited so often with his family that it was like an extension of home. Only Ireland was different.

"For the life of me," his mother had said, "I can't think of a soul who could introduce you to anyone in Dublin."

From the first he had walked the streets with this knowledge of his strangeness uppermost in his mind. A wholly unfamiliar sense of freedom had begun to take possession of him at once. It was almost a physical sensation, as though the weight of tradition, the incalculable associations of a lifetime made an actual burden that he had left on the dock at Boston, omitted from his luggage.

Just before leaving he had, in fact, acquired a few letters of introduction through a college association with a Boston paper. But he was free to ignore them. The initiative was entirely his, as it could never have been in the case of his family's friends.

He was quite willing to remain unacquainted, except casually, in a bar. He might speak to a girl in the street and find the most deep, the unimaginable and abiding freedom. Any minute, any girl with good legs and sweet eyes. But he hadn't spoken, and he had begun to get acquainted, and now at this reception of the American Minister's he was giving his courteous attention to this elderly woman who might as well have been a friend of his grandmother's.

"Shall we find ourselves a corner and sit down? Then if there's anyone you'd like to meet, you can just point them out to me. Or shall I find you a girl and let you dance?"

He quickly reassured her and when she had turned her back, followed her across the room, through the knots of chattering people, and towards the fireplace.

"I really don't know," she said when they had isolated two chairs and sat down, "why the Irish should be so perennially surprised when anyone who isn't Irish comes to Dublin. Actually I suspect they only ask in the hope of hearing something to flatter themselves and not at all out of curiosity. Everyone you meet will talk to you about the Irish, so I may as well put in my tuppence-worth. We're not a bit sentimental—that's the first magnificent misconception. We're a jolly hard-headed lot, and merciless to anyone who makes himself ridiculous!"

"Thank you for warning me."

"I have pleasant memories of Boston. It's a good place to visit, though I don't know how I should find it to live in." She was frankly studying him. "But I shouldn't have said you belonged in a city."

"We've always stayed a lot in the country. I guess while I was at college was the only time we really lived in town."

"Are you an only child? Don't look so alarmed. I'm not a mind reader, just inquisitive. Are you just through the university?"

"Last spring."

"What next?"

"I don't know. I guess that's why I lit out."

"You're very young, aren't you?"

He started to deny it, caught himself and said simply, "Twenty-two."

"And so you've lit out to get your bearings?" It was

kindly. He laughed both in surprise and relief, and she took him up on it at once.

"You sound as if you'd expected a lecture."

"I've had a good many."

"Family?"

"No, my friends. They call me an escapist. And into the Celtic twilight 'of all antiquated myths,' " he quoted with a wry grin.

"And what are they doing, your friends?"

"Politics, social work—"

"The age of reform. And you're a reactionary." He looked at her sharply.

"Now I've roused your suspicions again," she said. "I'm afraid you're too sensitive."

"Well—I do resent that, rather. Just because I won't jump into something I haven't got the hang of yet. Just because everyone else is going off at half cock, worrying about the underprivileged, joining the Party—who's to say that isn't another form of escape? The current version, the new mother, the streamlined womb—"

"That's rather good," she said. "And, mind you, I'm with you a good bit of the way. You've got to do your own thinking. But there's something on their side as well. They're not escaping action, at any rate. Because you know there is such a thing as thinking so much you never do anything else!" She laughed suddenly, a very young laugh. "I'm afraid you'd never have approved of me. I think I was born at half cock. And I've never done leaping without looking, either before or after.

What do you *feel*?"—she spoke very seriously now and her eyes seemed to darken—"because I suppose it's that makes us act. Or don't they let you feel in Boston? If that's what you've run away from—" Her conclusion was interrupted by the appearance of their host at her elbow.

"We're all going out on the terrace for a picture, May," he said. "Coming along?"

She got to her feet immediately, as lithely as a girl, and John followed her through the French doors with a distinct sense of relief. She had come altogether too close to the truth, and it was not a truth he cared to reveal. Ideas were common property, and he exchanged them freely. Even his own convictions and personal prejudices he was quite willing to expose, but feelings he traditionally guarded with an impregnable reserve.

It was still raining. It appeared to be a permanent condition. He looked out across the broad sweep of Phoenix Park and wondered if he could find a cab to take him back to the end of the carline. Not that he could get any wetter than the walk in had left him.

The picture taking over, he turned to the woman who was still beside him.

"Come to see me," she said promptly. "How about Saturday afternoon? Everyone will be off to Leopardstown and we can be quiet and talk."

"I'd like to very much."

"I'm at Greystones. Anyone will direct you." And she was off.

He realized then that he didn't know her name, or in fact, anything about her. He wandered back into the house, wondering if Boles would have any idea. He hadn't seen him since he first arrived. Dancing, probably, he told himself. He wandered in the direction of the music and met Jack coming out of the ballroom. His Irish color was even higher and he was carrying a damp handkerchief in his hand.

"I say, where've you been hiding? Met anyone? I ran into Lady Downs. Fat daughter. Phew! Anyone you'd like to meet?"

John grinned. "I've been exactly where I started from. You're the one that's been straying. Look, maybe you know someone I was just talking to. She asked me to tea and I don't even know her name."

"Pretty?"

"Very. And at least sixty years old. She had white hair, cut square like a little boy's."

Boles racked his brains obligingly. "Old girl," he mused. Then his face brightened. "Deep voice?" he asked. "Fog horn, sort of?"

"I guess so. At least, I'd call it a beautiful voice."

"You're in luck, old man, if it's who I think it is. May Powers."

"Yes!" John broke in. "Her name was May. Who is she?"

"Great old girl. Writes some. Lectures a lot—not everybody's dish. Revolutionary stuff. She's been in the

States a good bit, I should think. Knows everyone. Say—you know King Blake, don't you? At T.C.D.?"

"I don't think so. Gosh, give me a break, I've been here only a week."

"Thought you might have noticed her. Damned pretty, but not having any. Highbrow stuff. May's her grandmother—more or less."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, May adopted King's mother, years back. Came back from Europe with her, I believe. They do say—but that's another horse," he finished blandly.

"Oh."

"Well, if there's no one you'd like to meet, we could push off. Beastly jam, these things. How'd you come?"

"I took the street car and then walked from the end of the line. I didn't know it was so damned far in."

"I'll give you a lift back. Mother's staying on a bit. Sorry I didn't pick you up in the first place. Beastly nuisance, Phoenix Park."

John's hat was still soggy and he carried it. "Still like your digs?" Boles asked him politely. Their acquaintance was still at the stage of lapsing into abrupt formalities just as it seemed to be comfortable.

"They're O.K. They're convenient to everything, and nobody bothers me."

Boles grunted. "You'll find Dublin dull, I expect." It was really a question, or a kind of grudging apology. "No night life at all, you know."

"I like what I've seen so far," John told him truth-

fully. "That party you got me in on the other night—young and old, all kinds of people, doing nothing but talk. It was swell!"

They stopped in the traffic on O'Connell Bridge. Again Jack grunted. "Frightful bore, if you ask me. I'd like the States."

"They're not all of a piece, you know. Boston's a lot like Dublin."

"Poky place? Ever been to Hollywood? Vulgar as hell, I should imagine, but fun."

"I've visited there," John said. "With some English friends of my family. There's a big English colony, you know. They go on picnics the whole time, with one another. It was exactly like being in London, only the sun shone all the time."

Boles looked at him with genuine horror. "My God, what a sell," he said.

The traffic broke and they moved forward. "My God," Jack said again, "fancy going to Hollywood only to dance with Sheila Downs!" A minute later he glanced at John and his eyes were all at once oddly curious and at the same time reserved. "You know Kelley and that crowd?" he asked. "Should. You'd like them. High-brow stuff. Where'll I put you down?"

"Drop me at the gate," John said. "I've got some books to pick up. Look," he said just before getting out of the car, "I know enough high-brows already." He got out and then stood for a minute with his hand on

the door of the car. "Fancy coming to Dublin only to know some others."

Boles grinned. "Righto," he said, and then he shook his head in a puzzled amusement. "Only fancy coming to Dublin at all," he finished, before letting in the clutch and moving off.

John went past the statue of Oliver Goldsmith and under the stone arch that opened into the cobbled courtyard of Trinity College. He had gone straight there on the day he docked, and wondered at the roar of city traffic at the gates, that was muffled in the vault of the archway and lost to silence in the dim and fog-filled courtyard beyond. Gray buildings surrounded the gray cobbled area. Only from the holly trees, planted at intervals, red berries pricked the dim scene.

He stopped now as he had stopped on that first day, and as it seemed to him he could never fail to stop before the ancient, austere beauty of this place. It might have been arrested in time, even in space, for the square of clouded sky that it enclosed seemed its own, arrested, too, made permanent. It filled him with its own serenity and leaning against the stones of the archway behind him he said, "Ancient of Days," without knowing that he had spoken aloud. But immediately he was brought out of his abstraction and the peace which had possessed him was shattered by an imperious voice. "Go on!"

The girl was standing directly in front of him. She was without a hat, and wearing a trench coat with the

collar turned up to her ears. She was holding some books in both arms in front of her. These things he perceived although his eyes had gone straight to her face and remained there.

With a strange sense of familiarity that he could in no wise explain, he returned her serious regard for a full minute before he said, "You're King Blake." It might have been intuition, though his nature was not prone to it; it might have been recent association, and must have been a combination of both that gave him this inexplicable, certain knowledge. Yet it seemed to him more than that, and weighted the encounter with a unique significance.

He thought he had never seen so brilliant and delightful a smile. "And you're the American," she said.

After a pause which robbed it of the lightness for which he was trying, he brought out "Anonymity, at last."

"Are you so famous?"

He noticed how her mouth curled back on its short, upper lip. It was a proud, almost a disdainful mouth. "You look entirely different when you smile," he told her.

"How do I look when I don't?"

"Haughty."

"How unpleasant."

"Not at all." He almost added, "And you know it."

"You still haven't told me your name," she reminded him.

He stared at her, as indeed he had never stopped staring. Jack had said she was pretty. She wasn't; she was beautiful. He had said that she wasn't having any, and that wasn't true, either. "You know it already," he guessed. "I'm just wondering why."

For a second she looked surprised, then without the least self-consciousness she laughed. "Let's have tea," she suggested. "Where do you live?"

"Digs, in Kildare Street."

"I'll leave my books and pick them up later," she said. "Wait for me." He decided not to get his own until later when he would walk back with her.

He waited for her, feeling curious and excited. It wasn't only the singularity of the encounter, it was the girl herself. He had told himself a hundred times that faces shouldn't matter so much. They did though. And now he wondered, half knowing how dramatic he was being, whether hers expressed fire or ice. One or the other; nothing less. There was a flawlessness to her beauty, a symmetry that was almost too perfect. And then it was broken up in that unbelievable smile. When she came back he saw that she had left her books and that she carried a hat in one hand.

"Where shall we have tea?" he asked her.

She raised her eyebrows in exaggerated amazement. "Why, at your place, of course." He started to explain, but she had settled it and was rushing on. "I live out, at Greystones, and Granny's at the American Minister's. She'll be ages, so we've heaps of time. I suppose you

were there?" He nodded. "Granny went late. Who'd you meet?"

He turned then and looked at her, thinking of May Powers, but said only, "Scads of people. Jack Boles brought me back."

"Oh, him! You don't like him, do you?"

He laughed. "I can't say I'd want to be shipwrecked with him, if that's what you mean."

She snorted. "I couldn't bear to sit opposite him at tea! There was a German like him at Munich when I was at the university there. Red-faced! He used to follow me around, bleating!"

He looked down at her fastidious, contemptuous face. "I said you were haughty."

She shrugged. "Let's talk about you," she said. "All I know so far is that *One*, you are famous, and *Two*, you are rich, and neither one is very endearing."

"Now, wait a minute," he protested, and stopped in the middle of the sidewalk.

"But you've admitted you were famous." She continued to walk and there was nothing to do but keep up with her. "And all Americans are rich." Her widened eyes were a little too innocent. "Just as all Irish are poor," she went on with complete disregard for his efforts to interrupt. "Anyway, all decent Irish. Make a note of that, by the way." She glanced at him briefly out of the corners of her eyes. "If you have money in Ireland it means you sold out something better somewhere

along the line. I daresay it means the same everywhere, but it's rather simpler here."

"Now, look here!" He felt his anger rising. "You've made a couple of preposterous assumptions and now you're insulting me on the basis of them." It was she who stopped now, standing stock-still on the sidewalk.

"But how can you be so touchy!" she demanded. For a minute he was completely baffled by her look of wounded reasonableness. Then abruptly she threw back her head and roared. "I did have you going, didn't I?" she said happily. She took his arm and held it against her. "You're very nice," she said comfortably, walking in step with him, "and when you're cross you're irresistible. And now tell me all about yourself."

Instead he asked, "How long were you at Munich?" He thought perhaps it wasn't difficult to transfer her thoughts to herself. She had doubtless a limited interest in anyone else, and he would presently discover, or believe that he had discovered, to what it was limited in his case.

"My first two years," she said. "I did my schooling there—in Germany, I mean. And then went on to the university. Then I transferred to Trinity."

"Why Germany?" he asked.

"Mother was born there. I've lived there more than anywhere else. Granny won't go near the place! Isn't it luck I should be in Dublin this year?" she turned to ask him suddenly, and he was sharply conscious, as she leaned against him, of her breast beneath his arm.

They had reached his digs and John stopped. "I started to tell you, back there," he began to explain, "that I haven't any tea stuff."

For a minute she stood still and looked at him. "Don't be a fool," she said then. "I've had my tea and so've you." She started up the steps and he followed her. At the door to his room he said, "It isn't much," and pushed the door open for her. It was she who closed it, quickly, behind them and then whirled to face him.

"Why do you apologize?" she demanded. "I hate apologetic people! It's far better to be conceited. It's much simpler for other people too. They needn't be always stumbling around amongst your feelings." She flung her hat on the bed and sat down beside it.

He was already becoming accustomed to the violence with which she expressed herself, and said only, "Wouldn't you rather have the armchair?"

For answer she put her hands out and drew him down beside her on the bed. He sat down half reluctantly, feeling both drawn and wishing to withdraw. Immediately her mouth was against his. He felt the shape of it as clearly as he had beheld the shape of it. For the moment he had the illusion that the whole of her was there, in the proud shape of her mouth, the upper lip curled back against his own. Because it was strange to be thinking that way, he drew back and looked at her. "I don't understand you," he said foolishly, only half knowing how little he did.

She smiled at him. "There's nothing to understand,

Mr. Socrates," she told him. "It's just that I want you so much."

He stared at her stupidly. What was she—maybe eighteen? Out of his confusion he said unexpectedly, "I ought to spank you."

Immediately her face was all scorn. "How disgusting and—and masculine!"

"What did you expect I was?" He felt angry and faintly humiliated.

"Oh, I love you like that," she told him, but he had got up abruptly, just as she was leaning towards him. Without looking at her he asked, "How old are you?" It didn't really matter. It had nothing to do with his fundamental confusion, and was only a tangible point to fasten onto.

She laughed. "You're wonderful! I'm twenty-three. Older than you, I expect, and not nearly so naïve. You really are sweet when you're angry. The first time I saw you, you were looking furious."

He spun around at that. "I've never seen you before."

"Oh, of course not." She was leaning back on her elbows, dangling her legs. "You'd never have seen me if I hadn't jumped at you. You'd have gone back to America without even knowing I existed."

"Look here," he began, but he had nothing to say. He felt completely in the dark. He felt a fool. Perhaps she was doing it all for crack, as the Irish students say.

"Yes?" she prompted him finally. In his perplexity he went over and sat down on the edge of the bed beside

her. She moved over quickly, drawing her feet up, stretching out and making room for him. "Don't *think* so much," she urged him, and drew his head down to hers. He held her lightly, letting her kiss him, still not believing in her. But slowly her mouth obsessed him until when she stopped to look at him, it was he who began kissing her again. It was like being in a trance, more delicious than sleep. "You're so gentle," she told him wonderingly. The third time she said it he asked, "Would you like me to be rough?"

"Oh, yes!" she said. "Yes!" and held him closer. But he only went on kissing her, feeling hypnotized. In the end it was she who jumped up, in sudden self-possession. "Do you realize it's dark? It must be hideously late."

With more difficulty he roused himself and got to his feet. "I'll go back with you."

"No need." She was cheerfully matter-of-fact, but he insisted that it was necessary and guided her ahead of him, out the door, down the stairs, and into the fresh soft air of the street.

He was glad it was dark. Yet he was aware immediately of the girl's knowledge of his embarrassment. It was in the little smile on her lips, the assurance of her eyes when she looked at him. He remembered that she liked conceit and was further confused. He was a clumsy idiot; he had no savoir faire whatever and she was looking immensely pleased.

"You're having a lot of fun at my expense, aren't

you?" he asked curtly. "Is this the way you haze Americans?" As soon as he had said it he wished he hadn't. It only put him further at a disadvantage. For that was it, he knew all at once. Conceit was all very well in the abstract, or in relation to other people; it was fun for her to have this hold over him.

"How can you be so untrusting?" she asked him innocently. "Besides, it's not very flattering to me. Do you suppose I go about treating people this way? Golly!" —she took his arm again—"if you only knew how I've tried to get you alone or even make you look at me in a crowd. I can tell you every single place I've seen you, and exactly what you were doing, and who you were with. Would that satisfy you?"

Some passers-by stared at them, John saw. He saw, too, that the girl was unaware of them. "I don't know much about women," he said, and knew more forcibly than he had ever known before how true it was.

"Darling!" she said, and then dropped his arm as they passed under the arch in front of college. The street lights were on by this time and students were hurrying from the courtyard. "Good night, Miss Blake." John looked at the speaker as he passed.

"That's Kelley," King told him. "He writes."

"And he likes you."

"What makes you think so?"

"Oh," he said, groping, "he looked so respectful."

She chuckled. "I've never tried to seduce him!" Then she felt his repulsion and put a hand on his arm. "I

don't know him, really," she said simply. "He's very clever, I believe."

"So I've heard. Boles thinks I ought to know him."

She looked at him quickly. "Do you want to?" They stopped at the further side of the archway.

"You sound as if you didn't want me to," he said, amused, and puzzled again.

"I don't!" she told him. "I don't want you to know anyone but me. I want you all to myself. Good night, now." She went off rapidly towards the women's building and disappeared within.

The lights in the courtyard were fuzzy with fog. A messenger's handcart rattled over the cobblestones, and across the yard a German student called "Auf Wiedersehen," while John stood looking after her.

Chapter Three

IT WAS damned queer, John began to think in his third week in Dublin, how the Irish seemed to feel about the Germans. "They're so awfully clever, aren't they?" he heard on all sides, and it seemed to express a degree of admiration that wasn't altogether decent.

The university people were traditionally academic. They spoke, sometimes, with amusement, sometimes with vague alarm, of the "peaceful penetration." It wasn't easy to be sure how they felt, though the interest was inescapable. From the barber who cut his hair, from the maid who did his room, from the numberless little shopkeepers, the attitude was plainer, or more plainly expressed.

He admitted to himself that it was perhaps his cantankerous New England pride, but excessive admiration of another people, like undue respect for another man, made him uncomfortable. It was queer from the Irish, he thought, who, if for nothing else were known for their struggle for independence, their impassioned, continued resistance to the domination of England. Their

attitude towards Germany, from what he had heard of it, seemed to indicate that they would embrace her domination. He told himself that his impression was superficial in the extreme, but it was persistent and recurrent, and something for which he had been totally unprepared. It was, at least, the result of no conceivable prejudice in his mind, and for that reason struck him the more forcibly.

All these things were at the back of his mind and leapt to the fore when he ran into King Blake in the courtyard between classes, talking with one of the German exchange students. It was a number of days since he had seen her, and nearly all of that time he had been aware of her, had looked for her around college, at meetings or parties, and even along the street. Whatever she was, he knew that it was something unusual. Whatever she meant to him, it was important.

Seeing her at last was both entirely natural and a strange shock, so that for a minute he wanted to turn quickly and walk the other way, while at the same time he wanted to rush up to her, interrupt her conversation and carry her away with him. Between the two he hesitated uncertainly and stopped a few feet away. King was smiling and talking rapidly in German. The man with her was nodding vehemently and looking charmed.

He was one of the biggest men that John had ever seen, and yet so well-proportioned that his size was only apparent in relation to others. Now he might have been standing by an average or small woman, whereas John

knew that King was not far from his own six feet. The ugliness of the fellow's face was as remarkable as the symmetry of his body, but it, too, was commanding. Whether for good or evil, it expressed a force that was more impressive than any amount of good looks.

Perhaps it was the language, but John felt not only an outsider but a stranger to them both, a feeling that became more real when King turned for a brief instant to speak to him, before resuming her conversation. She knew that he was there, had undoubtedly seen him approach, and had now given him the signal to leave.

He felt a fool, and was furiously angry. The accompanying jealousy he was unwilling to acknowledge, but part of his anger was directed at the German. What an ass the fellow looked, smirking and nodding. Would she ask him to take her to his digs? Or had they been? More than once, no doubt. What a fool he must have looked himself. If the fellow had noticed him at all.

He had. Very little escaped the attention of Otto Streib, and still less got by his guard to come to the attention of others. John had barely gone out of sight when he made King aware of his observation. "You've met him, then?" he asked her, "the young American?"

"You needn't look so damned smug, it was sheer chance, as it happened."

"Don't be perverse," he said smoothly. "You leave no more to chance than I do. That's why we work so well together. In any case, you seem to have made an excellent beginning. Shall we have some coffee?" He touched

her elbow, having taken her acceptance for granted, and with a slight shrug of indifference she moved beside him, across the courtyard and into the street. "Don't pretend you are so bored," he said. "If it weren't for me you really would be, and you might be a little grateful."

"I don't know," she considered. "There is the American."

"Nonsense, he is a simpleton. Here." He guided her into the nearest coffee shop, and neither of them spoke again until they had seated themselves.

Immediately King resumed the conversation. "More of your clever, clever discernment, I suppose? Tell me all about him, then. I've only met him, you know."

"Very simple," he said, his amusement showing only in the depths of his eyes. "Typically purposeless. One of the many, many drones in that great American hive. Having been pampered already by a so-called education, he is pampering himself still further because it is the only thing he knows how to do."

"He might think the same of you."

"Easily," he agreed. "If I wish, that is exactly what he will think. But there, you see, I have the better of him."

"Quite. What do you think of that girl in the yellow jumper?"

Obligingly he glanced towards the table where King had directed his attention, though perfectly conscious of her deliberate change of subject. She had no intention of listening again to his favorite theme, and he was

willing to postpone it. "Attractive," he told her thoughtfully, "but cold, like so many of your Irish girls."

King laughed and he looked at her inquiringly. "I was just remembering," she explained, "the first time we ever talked."

A month since, on Registration Day, she had seen him on the steps of the library. Knowing him for a German, she had spoken to him. He had come over some weeks before and except for his fellow Germans in Dublin, and a few other exchange students who were only just beginning to arrive, he had made few acquaintances.

King's German delighted him, and he was further pleased to learn that she had been educated there, and had even in nineteen-thirty-three become a member of the Jugend. Her interest in him was slight until, in answer to the conventional question of whether he was enjoying Dublin, he had amused her by the violence of his unexpected answer. "My God! I lead the life of a monk! I have never seen such girls as these Irish!"

For a minute she had expected some sort of a belated apology. But whether it was a compliment to the excellence of her German, or whether it was for another reason, he had obviously excepted her from the category.

From that time they had been together a great deal, though their congeniality was largely circumstantial and entirely relative. He smiled at her now. "Thank God you spoke to me," he told her.

"What?" Her voice was heavy with mock surprise. "You wouldn't have known? You wouldn't have said, merely to look at me, 'There is a girl who has been brought up in Germany?' "

He looked at her anxiously. "You don't think I'm conceited, do you?"

She put her hand out to pat his. "I wouldn't like you half so well if you weren't. By the way, are you ever going to tell me what this wonderful plan is that you've been hinting at?"

At that his eyes fell. "Unfortunately, I haven't been selected after all." It was clearly difficult for him to admit. "I suppose I am too young," he went on. "At least so they consider. They are sending an older man, one with a great deal of experience. Captain Donner. Have you ever heard of him?"

"It sounds awfully familiar. Wait a minute—I know. But it can't be. I thought that was the name I read somewhere recently, in connection with some foreign propaganda. I thought he was on trial, or trying to escape—anyway, the impression I had is that he was some sort of traitor to the Reich."

The German smiled. "That is the man. Clever, isn't it?"

"I don't get it."

"He is going to America as a refugee," he explained, with a return to his customary enthusiasm. "Wonderful piece of strategy, isn't it?"

She whistled. "But the boldness of it!"

"Marvellous!" He nodded, and for the moment his personal vanity was forgotten in his national pride.

"And where does our little American come in now?" King asked.

He lighted a cigarette before answering. "We have an excellent force in our San Francisco headquarters," he told her, speaking rapidly, "and the New York area is well covered. But the so-called New England section has been neglected. In times past it was a heavy industrial area, and it has never lost many of its essential assets. Already it is reviving and before long it will be again important industrially, with particular emphasis on the machines of war. Now, in our statistical survey of American industry for potential war strength this sector cannot be overlooked."

"Oh. I had wild visions of sabotage," King said, with what equally well might have been disappointment or relief. He squinted at her through the smoke of his cigarette.

"Interference," he said, accenting the word smoothly, "is often an attendant possibility. Imagine, for example, that we are already prepared to absorb England. America will certainly align herself with Britain. Whether or not she actually engages, openly, there will undoubtedly be underhand assistance. If it is possible to—shall we say, 'intercept' any of these munitions designed for our destruction, it will be fortuitous. Naturally. Of course"—he lifted one shoulder high—"one never knows what may be useful. One can only be ab-

solutely thorough, take every possibility into account, and then hope for the best. This boy belongs in New England. He has considerable property there, some influence—" He smiled in answer to the interrogation in King's eyes. "Fortunately—" His inflection made the word droll—"I have access to such information as I may require. What you would call 'sheer chance.' " He labored the point.

"I got you the first time." There was more than a touch of impatience in her voice. The Germans were not without humor. She frequently defended them in this respect. But she knew, out of a vast experience, that there were tiresome limits to their humor. They could seldom, for example, resist the emphasis, the extra touch that blurred the first edge. It came from their insistent egotism, their unshakeable conviction that no one else was quite so clever, and if their fine points were not brought out, they would be lost on others.

For a minute he studied her. "You know," he said then, "it's more than a week since you've been out to the stables. You're looking pale. Some exercise would do you good. Why not come out this afternoon? I have a lesson at four and then I'm free."

"Did you know," she asked, "that I'm getting a fierce reputation for going about with a German groom?"

"I hope you explain my situation," he said stiffly. "After all, it's quite voluntary. It is an honor to be permitted to leave the country, to represent the Reich

abroad. But Germay must husband her resources. We all know that. We are proud to take as little money from the country as we possibly can. And there is every reason why we should augment it by any means at our disposal. My horsemanship—"

"Oh, I know!" She cut him off, but her eyes flattered him. "Your horsemanship is too damned good not to look professional to an Irishman. And they're willing to pay for your instruction. But you ought to know me well enough by now to know that I never explain!"

"How about it?" He expanded with gratification. "Come out with me this evening and we'll have dinner afterwards. I've got a new water hazard I want you to try." His face, lighted with enthusiasm, was oddly attractive but she wasn't fooled by his meaning. There were no better horsemen in the world than the Irish, she knew, but they had too much genuine regard for horses to make for the personal showmanship that characterized the Germans. Streib, in the tradition of his countrymen, was an exhibitionist. He was willing to ask anything of his mount, no matter how arduous or endangering, and the result was a boldness of style that perfectly suited King's own. If it required any defense, she would have pointed out, reasonably, that he was taking quite as much risk himself as he was asking of his horse. It seemed to her fair enough, when she thought about it at all. It was more important that she found it exhilarating.

"Very well, little boy, I'll let you show off," she said.

Chapter Four

JOHN walked for a number of blocks without any sense of direction, oblivious even of the sun which, for once, had burned through the fog and shone broadly with almost American largesse, bringing into unaccustomed focus the blurred outlines of Dublin.

He walked swiftly, his body keeping unconscious pace with his mind. He was not actually thinking, but that was a familiar process, and he was struggling now to perform the difficult feat of translating into thought a welter of unfamiliar emotions. In reason he could stand on certain ground. He was unaware of having lost that ground already. The habit was so strong that he sought it instinctively, and without knowing that in doing so he repudiated a deeper desire, and the true object of his presence here.

The confounding image of Kingsley Blake was impossible to break down. No single, detached fact was any more comprehensible than the whole. Or, like mercury, if she fell apart to the touch of his mind, it was into bits as complete and elusive. He rejected her beauty. He had seen girls who attracted him more,

with more directness and without confusion. They needn't even be pretty. If he had seen her face, in a crowd, disinterested in himself, he would have seen it without emotion. He might even have disliked it, for her beauty was like a blow, defiant, unbeguiling. It failed to achieve the purpose of beauty, which was more important than beauty itself.

She had a power, undeniably, but he wondered now if it was anything more than the power of conceit, the force of a nature too lacking in imagination to conceive of any obstacle to its own success. And that was a weakness which just happened to be effective in bald accomplishment and in relation to natures more subtly bound. It seemed to him probable that she enjoyed a relationship to the German that was satisfactory to them both, and suitable in a way that his own could never be. He wondered if, in fact, she had any relationship to himself at all, or if she had not dismissed him in general as completely as she had done in this particular instance.

Belatedly he became aware of the smell of roasting coffee and half-automatically turned in to one of the innumerable shops which contributed to this characteristic aroma of Grafton Street. The fragrance was invariably tempting, and he had not yet learned to remember in time the disappointment of the actual brew. For a number of minutes he sat, heels hooked over the rung of his chair, and inhaled the burnt, acrid vapor from the cup at his elbow. A dab of whipped cream melted

across the surface and yellowed the brown liquid. Next time he would order tea. He remembered thinking that before. And then he remembered something else. He had failed to acknowledge King's greeting. He had looked her straight in the face and turned his back and walked off. Of that at least he was certain.

He paid his check and left the shop, wondering where King was now and whether he could find her at college still. She might be in a class, or she might have gone to the library. Or she might be sitting on the grass in the quadrangle. There was nothing to do but look.

It was exasperating, but not surprising that he could find her nowhere. It was the hour for tea and the courtyard was nearly empty when he gave up expecting to see her. The next day he had an appointment with Madame Powers. If King weren't there he would be disappointed. If she were it might very well be embarrasing. Anxious and irresolute, he stood at the college gates and was suddenly relieved to remember that he had accepted an engagement for that evening.

Jack Boles had obligingly wangled him a bid to an Irish dance that the Gaelic element at college was holding. It was particularly good-humored of him in that he had himself no interest in the performance in particular, nor respect for the enterprise in general. John had to admit that there was reason in his attitude. At Trinity College, the Anglican stronghold of Ireland, the only place in Dublin that flew the Union Jack, the reverberations of a Gaelic Renaissance were undeniably

open to the charge of affectation; its kilt-clad supporters a quaint lot that would have inevitably aligned themselves with some movement that set them apart from their fellow students, if they hadn't instituted a departure of their own. It might as well be the Gaelic Revival, to John's philosophic view. In any case he was curious.

The music would be provided by a solitary fiddler who arranged the reels, and then moved about in their midst while he played. "It's strenuous," Boles had warned him, "but you've no call to worry about the steps. Let go and fling yourself about! If there's any one at T.C.D. who knows much more about them, I'll take off my pants myself."

"Do the women wear kilts as well?" John wanted to know.

"I think not," Jack had considered. "I believe they get into some garment of alleged antiquity, more or less in the shape of a dress but by no means in the shape of a woman. You'll see for yourself, and I'm betting that the once will do you."

John began to look forward to the evening, partly because, at the moment, it was more profitable than this fruitless preoccupation with Kingsley Blake.

"I ought to have said," Jack told him when he had brought the car to a stop before a small church in the Dublin suburbs, "that you've no call to dance at all, if you've no mind to. We're an easygoing lot, and leave one another alone. Anyway in small matters."

The church windows were dark, but there were lights showing from a long building adjoining it at the rear. The door opened as they approached it. A girl's figure was outlined briefly in the new pattern of light. The sounds of mingled voices and a sharp, tuning violin eddied around her before she withdrew to leave the doorway dark once again. John had only time to perceive that she was slightly clad in some short, straight garment that gave her the appearance of a poorly dressed child. "There's nowhere in Dublin that talk is amiss," Jack continued.

"But surely, if you go to a dance—" John was interrupted by a derisive chuckle.

"The Irish talk in bed! I knew a fellow once spent the night with a girl and only realized the following day that all they'd accomplished between them was a disagreement on the relative value of faith and works. Not only that"—he paused on the threshold—"when he came to the realization it filled him with the greatest satisfaction in that his argument had been for faith, and the night most certainly stood as a refutation of works." He opened the door and held it for John. "Your first Ceilidhe," he said and made a mocking bow.

The bare walls of the room rose to uncovered rafters. A solitary chandelier suspended from the center beam lighted the room with direct, hard impartiality. The floor had been cleared and straight-backed auditorium chairs were ranged in files along the walls. There were possibly thirty people standing about in groups. Con-

siderably more than half of them were girls and they all wore the shapeless, stark dresses, coming barely to their knees, like the one John had glimpsed in the doorway. A sort of scarf, orange in color, was draped diagonally from one shoulder to hang, back and front, to the hems of their dresses. "Why orange?" John wondered aloud. "It's saffron," Jack corrected. "Have you never seen the flag of Eire? Holy God," he said in a suddenly lowered tone, "there's not a face in the lot I've ever laid eyes on before. Is it the National crowd, do you think?"

"What's that?"

"University College!" he answered so shortly that John glanced at him in surprise, and was further surprised to see that a look of remarkable anger was growing in his customarily good-humored face.

"What's the matter with them?"

"It's the principle of the thing! If someone has been pulling my leg—" His fury seemed out of all proportion, and John was still looking at him in uncomfortable amazement when his expression changed again as abruptly. One of the men detached himself from a group at the far side of the room and now extended his hand. "Glad to see you, Boles." Jack shook his hand almost savagely, his composure not wholly restored.

"Didn't know you in your petticoat," he said gruffly. "Thought I'd got into the wrong pew." He introduced John. "Is this the T.C.D. crowd, right enough?" he persisted.

"You don't come out for these things often enough," the other man grinned. "Come on and I'll take you around." He spoke to John. "Ever done any reels?" His speech was accented in the manner of the native Gaelic speaker and was strange to John's ears. "Are you a Dubliner?" he asked him. "Well, I am, then." He paused and a quizzical grin crinkled his eyes. "But I've spent so much time in the Gaeltacht, I've got into their way of speech. My father's a Gaelic scholar—"

"Oh, of course," John recollected all at once. "Professor O'Neill. He advised me, when I first arrived. I'd have liked nothing better than to study with him but I'm a complete beginner, and his course is very advanced."

"Great old boy. He's been collecting folklore for years, recording songs and stories of the old people in the remote Gaelic-speaking parts. So we've lived very little in Dublin. Maeve"—he touched the elbow of a girl standing near—"here's a pupil for you."

She looked very directly at John. Her eyes were serious and unrevealing. "Do you want to learn?" The question was incurious. She was not the first Irish girl who had presented to him this simple, masculine appraisal.

"I think so," he told her, while he asked himself why he should call it masculine. Because it was wholly lacking in coquetry, perhaps. He knew it was not the proper word for what was only a particular kind of curiosity based on a particular probability. He looked away from

the girl's unsmiling regard in order to acknowledge his introduction to another man.

"Didn't I see you at the Philosophical Society the other evening?" The man was uncommonly short and had an air of grave dignity. If it was compensatory he at least escaped the absurdity of overdoing it. Without it he might have been a little absurdly boyish, for his coloring was almost too delicate, and John even wondered if his face had ever been shaved. It was not a typically Irish face, although his upper lip was racially long. "Too bad the meeting bogged down. Hope it won't discourage you. Austin's a fool, but we can usually manage him."

"Was he the red-headed fellow that kept talking about Alice in Wonderland?"

"Rotten exhibitionist," the other nodded. "Kelley had a damned good paper. I've asked him for a transcript of it. You can't take in a concept as original as his in one hearing, by a lot."

"Here we go!" It was the girl named Maeve. "Talk again! Our legs can atrophy so long as we exercise our vocal cords."

John was surprised to find that although her remarks were directed at the others, she was looking at him. She looked so accusing that he automatically began to frame an apology.

"Just a moment, darling." O'Neill spoke soothingly and as though he were addressing a child. "We've to introduce our guest first of all," and he steered John

smoothly towards another group. " 'Ah, women, in our hours of ease,' " he quoted humorously, " 'uncertain, coy and hard to please.' "

"I shouldn't say there was anything uncertain or coy about Irish girls from what I've seen of them," John said.

"Perhaps they're too subtle for you." It was amused but still impudent. "At least, take my word for it, they're damned hard to please."

"Perhaps they don't want to be pleased."

O'Neill looked at him sharply. "That's a deep remark." It was suspicious.

"The Irish are deep," John said, and knew immediately, with amusement, that the other man was gratified, even flattered.

"Payne," he said now, almost unctuously, "I want you to meet one of the few thinkers that is still at large. Mat O'Hannon. In Dublin, you know, we jail anyone with an idea."

"A subtle civilization we have." O'Hannon held out his hand as he spoke. He was dark and heavyset with protruding lips and a low forehead. Only intelligent eyes relieved his face from complete grossness. They were at once shrewd and reflective. He might have been forty, John considered, but was probably not more than thirty.

"Who else takes the intellect as seriously as that? The Germans, possibly," he answered his own question. "But they harness it. They make it work. They put it

to the service of the state. A trusting, even a childlike attitude." He raised an unkempt eyebrow and looked off into space. "One could almost call it crude." He seemed to think aloud. "No, the Germans have only guessed at its power and imagined that it can be used."

"There are utilitarian ideas," John suggested. Behind him he could hear the violinist beginning to play in earnest. O'Hannon took him by the elbow and began to move towards the edge of the floor.

"But can you conceive of the lack of imagination implicit in adopting thought? Not this thought or that thought, but Thought itself? The creation of Frankenstein isn't in it with the folly of endorsing the human mind."

"What do the Irish back?"

From somewhere within the folds of his kilt, O'Hannon got out a pipe. "Horses, to be sure," he said. "And women. Including," and all at once his eyes focused on John's with an intent, unreadable look, "the Whore of Babylon."

"Aaah." It was the short fellow with the long upper lip who had come up beside them and now contributed his agreement on a windy sigh. "The Gothic Gargantua," he said presently, "that immeasurable shadow in which we all walk and think and have our blighted beings." His voice rose and fell like the rhythms of poetry. "Like the womb it was before us, and beyond the tomb it will prevail. Look out for it." He turned to John abruptly. "It has a lovely symmetry. The model of

aspiration. And it's only when you've got inside that you learn how the roof leaks."

O'Hannon took it up. "And the little man in black has taken your umbrella at the door." He held a match to to the bowl of his pipe.

"We talk in parables." O'Neill had drifted up to join them.

"We talk," O'Hannon said. The reels were forming in the center of the room. "The Yanks are an astonishing people." O'Hannon's voice brought John's attention away from the dancers again. "They work like slaves and play like children, but what is it that they're after?"

"That has always seemed to me an individual matter," John told him. "I've never thought in terms of a national goal—we're such a large country to start with. I don't think people realize until they've been there quite how big America is. So it breaks down into regions, inevitably, I suppose. Take myself, I've never felt an American really. Here I begin to. At least I find myself trying to. It's partly natural, I guess, and partly conscious. Because I've always felt a New Englander. And that's quite as definite an inheritance as the Irish, or the Germanic, or the English."

"Sort of bastard British, isn't it, as nearly as I get it?" O'Neill's tone saved the observation from offense.

"At its worst, yes," John told him, trying to be fair. "Or at its most superficial—its most sophisticated. That's the word for it," he said quickly. "But the large, and largely inarticulate, body of New England isn't bastard

anything. It's homely. It isn't pretentious in any way. It's a hell of a lot simpler than anything I know of anywhere else. It—" he hesitated, "it makes it hard to talk about, because then you start getting pretentious about your unpretentiousness, and then you're sophisticated."

"I'd always supposed," O'Neill said, "that New England was the most sophisticated part of America. The naïve, ebullient American—the Rotarian and all that—is always a 'westerner,' as you say."

John began to feel confused. "No, I don't think it's sophisticated at all! That's what I'm trying to say."

"But it has great tradition," O'Hannon put in, "and a great reliance on its tradition. That makes for self-consciousness. It reduces spontaneity—or it's a denial of spontaneity."

"You talk so damned well," John said in sudden, half-humorous exasperation. It was more than that, he knew, that was getting the better of him. It was his own knowledge of the truth in what had been said. At least his uneasy suspicion that they were getting at something he knew to be true of himself. "What does Ireland want? I'll put you on the spot now."

"Nirvana." O'Hannon drew back his head and half closed his eyes. "Mind you"—his attention came to focus again—"it must be a highly conscious state of oblivion. We must be minutely aware of our nonexistence. We must cogitate upon our mindlessness—Holy God in heaven," he exploded, "amn't I describing ourselves? What else do we do? How else do we live? Gentlemen,

I give you Ireland, a minutely conscious, inveterately vociferous state of oblivion!"

"When I was a lad," O'Neill said reminiscently, "I remember asking the priest how did he know we weren't in Hell already? The poor man was scandalized at what he described as such cynicism in anyone so young. It seemed to me only odd that people had come to these particular conclusions about the order of events. This, they decided, was Life. Now mightn't it just as well be that Life was still ahead or possibly behind us? And wasn't I maybe being the more optimistic of the two?"

O'Hannon removed the pipe from his mouth in order to laugh with abandon. "I admire your nerve," he said then. "I would only criticize your tact." At that they all laughed.

"Yes," O'Neill reflected, "I can see now that a man in his position could hardly be expected to view the possibility objectively."

"The freedom of the unsophisticated mind. And how little we value it for the brief time it's ours. Now there again—but I'm beginning to repeat myself. Perhaps, after all, we ought to give ourselves over to the dance." O'Hannon turned himself elaborately around to view the scene behind him.

Looking with him, John saw Boles whirling a stocky girl with every appearance of competence and enjoyment.

"Now, it's a strange thing," the short fellow began, "why different peoples have adopted or developed the

various dances that they have. What does the reel suggest to you, in connection with our national character?"

"I should think we may as well sit down," O'Neill suggested. "Or does it appeal to your perversity, O'Hannon, to continue this pretense?"

"Yes," O'Hannon mused. "The imminence of action never to be enacted—it does seem to be our natural condition of equilibrium. However, I am quite willing to compromise with the reality of my spine. I trust," he continued, letting himself slump comfortably into a chair, "that I shall never be called upon to defend the reel in alien company. Between ourselves, I should say it is no dance at all, being wholly devoid of either sexual or religious significance. I suppose it is a form of calisthenics, and may serve some indefinite therapeutic purpose."

"Or, perhaps," John put in, "it's the only pure dance."

O'Neill caught it up. "Anything else being either an abortive copulation or a perversion of the act of worship? It's quite possible."

A part of John's attention was occupied with the dancers. The general formation was familiar to him from occasional participation in a Virginia reel. But this seemed to follow a more elaborate pattern, and at the same time to achieve a wildness that eluded any design. The latter was undoubtedly the result of the tremendous energy of the dancers. And then the fiddler, who dodged mercurially about in the manner of a musical referee, gave a whimsicality to the performance, now

accelerating his tempo, now calling an unexpected change, always manipulating the pattern before it could become fixed.

"Have you noticed," O'Hannon inquired, "how we nearly always arrive at conclusions satisfactory to our vanity? A rotten smug lot, we Irish. No wonder we never compete! Now the Yanks"—he turned to John—"you'll forgive us," he interpolated politely, "are often accused of a national sense of superiority. Actually they've the most highly developed competitive sense of any people in the world, I should think. And when you come to think of it, nothing could be more fair and modest."

The music stopped and the unity of the dance broke up into so many perspiring individuals, one fanning her face with her hands, another blotting his forehead with a handkerchief. It was a moment before any of them had breath enough for speech. In the brief silence John wondered if they wouldn't be requiring fresh recruits, and considered with some misgiving the possibilities of his own performance. He had barely framed these thoughts when the fiddler commenced again, and after a slight, conversational delay, the same dancers began anew to weave another pattern.

"Tireless," O'Hannon mused. It still seemed to John remiss that in a preponderance of women four men should detach themselves with such total unconcern. But it seemed not to occasion even surprise in anyone else.

"Have you been into the Gaeltacht at all?" O'Neill asked him out of the preoccupied silence.

"I'm not exactly sure what you mean by that."

"Well, it's the Gaelic-speaking part. There's less of it all the time, despite the ardor of our government. Donegal's the only fir-Gaeltacht left, where no English is spoken at all," he explained, "or complete-Irish-speaking by literal translation."

"What is the government's idea? All the street signs in Irish—"

"Just our brand of nationalism. They pay the country people so many pounds a year for every child that can speak the Irish when the government man comes around. Putting a premium on English. That's the basic intention, no matter how they romanticize our so-called 'Renaissance'!"

"I should have thought you'd approve of that," John suggested.

"It's the wrong way to go about it," O'Hannon spoke up, "even if it's practical at all in a world that's growing smaller all the time."

The short fellow said, "It's based on the false premise that Ireland is capable of complete independence. And all the while, half our people are still finding work in England because there's not enough here to go 'round. What use is the Gaelic to them? If the program really succeeded it would be a complete failure."

John grinned at the Irish bull but the other man continued in earnest.

"Have you never heard the toast 'Death in Ireland'? It's not comical when you consider the reasons. Oh, they like to talk of the potato famine as the whole occasion for emigration, but one crop's not the root of the matter, and the situation's very little better today. To say the least of it," he concluded, "it's putting the cart before the horse to equip us exclusively with a language that's spoken nowhere else in the world, when we're equipped in no otherwise for exclusive existence."

"Furthermore," O'Neill said, "the people aren't fooled. Except for the most remote parts, as I've said, they're increasingly bi-lingual, and if they lose either one of the two, it's not going to be the English. They've learned its value too bitterly well."

The music stopped again, and this time Boles broke away from the group to come over and join the men.

"The sweat's running down my legs," he said. "Maybe there's sense to the kilts after all."

"Sit down and cool off," O'Neill suggested. "I'll take your place. Come along, O'Hannon. It'll do your brains no harm to stir up your blood a little."

"Have you seen enough?" Boles asked John. "I'm ready to go if you like. I could do with a drink," he admitted, "in a very dark, very cool, very quiet pub."

John had begun to be conscious of the close air and the strain of the unshaded overhead light despite the charm of the conversation. For a minute he watched O'Hannon and O'Neill take their places opposite two girls who had been partnering one another.

"If you're going in to Dublin," the short fellow spoke up, "I'll join you, if I may." They crossed the room unheeded by the dancers and let themselves out into the gratifying darkness where a cool, light rain was falling.

Chapter Five

It was after nine when John awoke the next morning, to realize almost at once that this was the day he was to have tea with Madame Powers at Greystones. As soon as he had gotten out of bed he saw the note that had been slipped under his door. It was unsigned, and he had never seen King Blake's writing, yet he had felt certain that it was from her even before he had opened it. "I've moved into digs," it read. "Seven guesses why?! Meet me at T.C.D. after lunch and I'll take you over."

It was so entirely like her that he grinned, even while he felt piqued. A peremptory command that disregarded any plans he might have, that assumed his inclination was hers, and that ignored the encounter of the previous day.

He had gone to bed with the intention of seeking her out the first thing in the morning and making his apologies. Now he was persuaded that it was she who should apologize. Obviously she had no intention of doing anything of the sort. Very well, he told himself, he would ignore the encounter too. In fact, and he chuckled,

perhaps he would ignore this command. It would doubtless be a unique experience for her. He did have another engagement, and there was considerable question whether he could actually meet King and still have time to cycle down to Greystones for tea. He had a real excuse, and it was an excellent opportunity for asserting himself. Together with all essentially modest people he had moments of wishful domination. In the long run, of course, they were quite likely only to rebound to his own defeat. But now, with King's note in his hand, he was enjoying a brief sense of power. She was easily the most fascinating girl he had ever met, and she was openly chasing him.

He had been chased by a prostitute in Paris in the presence of his parents, and he had been chased by a number of well-bred girls so discreetly that he hadn't known it. He remembered these latter without individuality, only as the nice girls of whom his mother had approved. He could remember with vivid distinction the ones she had disliked. There were two of them. The first one had been while he was still in school. Her family had come to spend the summer at a neighboring country house. She was the first girl of his acquaintance to wear lipstick. She had copper-red hair and painted her mouth a terra-cotta. He could still remember how she had asked him, the first time they were left alone, why he kept looking at her mouth. He had never kissed a girl before. The rest of that summer was a chaotic memory of anticipation and uncertainty, of protracted

anguish and occasional delight. And always in the background the unnatural quietness of his mother towards whom he had become abruptly secretive.

During his junior year at college there was Chili who was rude to his mother on the one occasion when they met. He hadn't been aware of it at the time. In any case it hadn't mattered. He had spent his whole year's allowance on her in three months. At the end of that time he had found out that she was sleeping with a medical student who couldn't afford the things she liked.

His mother was generally right and she could make him acutely uncomfortable. But that was the extent of her power. She never quite managed to deter him. Very briefly at this moment he considered with certainty that she would not like Kingsley Blake.

He whistled while he ran the water and stropped his razor. For a minute he studied his reflection in the mirror over his shaving stand. He would remember more than once the singular circumstance of their first encounter, the disquieting enigma which King had presented to his mind. Only now for a little time he was distracted by the excitement of this novel pursuit.

When he had finished dressing he picked up her note again. Its presence made him feel almost as if King herself had just been in the room, and he was sharply aware of how much he wanted to see her. He was even conscious, in a way that was more vivid than memory, of her mouth against his own. "Oh, Hell," he said cheer-

fully, and when he left the room he knew that he would go directly to hunt her up.

At the college gates he began to wonder how to go about locating her, when he saw her walking ahead of him. How he knew her, from the back and differently dressed, he couldn't have said, but he hurried forward without a question. "King!"

She turned, already smiling, having known his voice. "Darling!" They stood and looked at one another and, for the moment, he was without self-consciousness.

"I just found your note," he told her. "Can you have lunch with me?"

"Of course. Let's have it at my place. I've got a stove."

"Do you have a class now?" he asked. She was terribly sorry, but she had. "I'll get the food, then. What will it be?"

"Oh, sausages and stuff," she suggested. "They're simple."

"Right! Meet me here in an hour?"

Before turning away she put her hand out and touched his arm. Slight as the contact was, the warmth of it went all over him. He felt as though she had leaned her body against his, and it was a wrench to turn, when she turned, and walk off.

It wasn't until he was half way through the cup of tea that would have to stay him until lunch that John remembered the afternoon's engagement again. Immediately he wished he could cancel it, and almost as

quickly rebuked himself. Yet the temptation persisted and took vivid form under the influence of his new assurance and the excitement of King's touch. All his doubts of her, all his inborn caution that she had previously heightened, seemed to have left him now. In a thoughtless, unquestioning, incurious void he desired her, exactly as she had made him know that she desired him.

He could send a wire to Madame Powers. He could telephone her. Something might easily have arisen that it was urgent he should fulfill. She would understand, and ask him another time. He had to have this afternoon with King who was expecting it. If he had intended not to go, he should have told her this morning.

"I'm quite near you, on Dawson Street," King told him as soon as they met. "Granny suspected the worst immediately, by the way. But don't get the wind up," she advised him calmly, "she's passionately independent herself. Jolly glad to be rid of me, I've no doubt. And she ought to be sympathetic."

"What do you mean by that?"

"She was a famous beauty, you know. And she's never been noted for her conventionality."

"Look," John began. Now, it seemed to him, was the time to make a clean breast of the situation. But he found he couldn't go on. "I'll go into that later," he finished lamely. As soon as they had got into King's flat he knew why he had put off his explanation.

"You've learned a lot in a week," she said a little breathlessly, when he stopped kissing her.

"Like it?" Still smiling into his eyes, she nodded. Then, unaccountably, he said, "How do I compare with your German beau?" Saying it seemed to crystallize some lingernig resentment within him and he moved away from her. "I meant to tell you," he said before she had a chance to speak, "that I've got an engagement for this afternoon."

"Oh?"

"Oh!" he echoed her sharply.

For a minute she considered him coolly. "Awfully afraid you're going to fall for me, aren't you?" she asked him then. It was true. He supposed it was even obvious, and it was unreasonable of him to find it annoying.

"I suppose that is it," he admitted. "You're so damned attractive, and then—"

She interrupted him to say drily, "My German beau, as you call him, can do better than that."

"You know what I mean."

She moved off towards the kitchenette. "We may as well start the food. You know," she said after a minute, "it's no good underestimating me. I even know better myself. Unless I change my mind, you might as well give in now."

"Wrong," he told her, more quietly than he felt. "Go on acting like a monument of human conceit and *you* won't have a chance."

She took the meat from him. "Fix the stove, will you?" she asked. He got down on his heels in front of it. "The only reason," she said evenly, "that men don't like conceited women is that conceited women seldom treat them well. I'm different."

"You certainly are," he agreed.

She patted the top of his head. "Lamb," she said sweetly. "Are you getting anywhere with the primus?"

"Is that what it is? I've never seen one before."

"Move over," she directed, and proceeded to start the stove.

He stood up. "Haven't you got a window stuck, or something?" he asked. "Just anything that takes strength and no skill."

She laughed at him, and then quickly kissed him. "You needn't pretend to be pathetic," she told him, "because I'm completely gone on you, and you know it." He started to make a joking rejoinder, but she looked so entirely serious, even grim, that he could only stare at her, not believing what she had said, but not knowing what else to believe.

After lunch, and over their cigarettes, King smiled at him tranquilly. "So you've got an engagement for the afternoon," she teased him.

"But I have," he assured her, "damn it."

"Are you serious?"

"But," he protested, "you gave me no warning at all."

She saw that he was perfectly serious. "I didn't realize

that you were in such demand all of a sudden," she said coldly.

"I'm not. I've had this engagement for over a week. Before I met you, as a matter of fact."

"You might have broken it."

He refused to acknowledge how nearly he had. "Why should I? I made it first, and if you really want to see me, there's plenty more time."

"If I don't really want to see you," she mocked him, "what the Hell do you think I took this place for? I gave up going to Leopardstown this afternoon, if you'd like to know."

"I'm terribly sorry. After all, it's my loss too."

"Is it? Who are you meeting, anyway?"

He had hoped she would not see fit to ask him that. "A very charming woman," he said, not to deceive her, but only to protect himself. She got up quickly.

"In that case it's Leopardstown for me!" she said crisply and went to the phone. In another minute he heard her asking for Otto Streib, and he wasn't surprised when presently she began to talk in German. Embarrassed and irritated, John got up and began to move dishes from the table to the sink. Still it was impossible to be unaware of the provocative gaiety of her voice. When she joined him again at the sink she was smiling secretly. "He is"—she paused as though mentally translating—"beside himself with joy that I have completed my business appointment so rapidly."

"Have I time to help you with these before he gets here?" he asked stolidly.

"Oh, but he wouldn't mind finding you here. He thinks you're a business acquaintance."

John hung on to his temper. "In that case, he can hardly expect me to be washing your dishes. I'll leave them for him." At the door he turned. "I would be interested, in passing," he said, "to know just what this strange affinity amounts to between the Irish and the Germans."

"Have you noticed it?"

"You can't miss it," he said. "But they're so different! And I'd always thought the Irish were much too independent—" King cut him short.

"Nonsense!" she said scathingly. "Just because they wouldn't accept England's domination. Being a dutiful daughter, and under compulsion, isn't at all the same thing as being a faithful mistress out of choice. "It's damned funny," she went on, "with all the talk about sex in the world that no one ever thinks of applying it to peoples. It does apply, though. And it's clearly the explanation in this case. The Irish are a feminine race! What do they ever do in the world, for instance? Nothing but inspire other people. Who has preserved what there is of Celtic culture? The Germans, very largely." After a pause she began again.

"Kathleen ni Houlihan, the personification of Ireland. Or, if you like, my dark Rosaleen. Always a woman, and the farther off you see her, the more she inspires you—

with the mystery of the eternal female, I suppose. The Germans are masculine, obviously."

John interrupted this time. "But so is John Bull."

King snorted her contempt. "An old man, an old miser, totally devoid of imagination, and arrogating to himself the duties of the heavy parent. Germany has understood us! Her scholars have recognized our scholars, her poets have celebrated our poets. Some of the finest translations from the Celtic exist in the German language. And then, she has never attempted to rule us!"

"But," John put in, "isn't it true that there is a sort of 'peaceful penetration' going on?"

"You mean the Shannon power scheme?"

"And the sugar-beet industry in the south."

"But there you are!" she nodded triumphantly. "We could have harnessed the Shannon! We could have started the beet industry. But we're too damned lazy. And it isn't congenial to us. It's men's work, after all."

"Still," he persisted, "I should think it would annoy the Irish to have the Germans settling in, making their livings here, yet doing all their purchasing from the Fatherland."

"You've been listening to propaganda," she told him. "Doubtless they buy from Germany what we haven't got here. That's our stupidity, again. Anyway, their reciprocal trade treaties are damned good. We can get German stuff for a lot less than you people pay. And there's no beating their manufactures."

John grinned ruefully. "I know," he admitted. "I got a secondhand German camera before I left home. Now I find I could buy the same thing here, new, for less than the secondhand price at home."

"Exactly! And you did get a German camera. Because there aren't any better, are there? Oh, there's no arguing about their cleverness," she finished with satisfaction.

"Scientifically," he conceded, "they're good."

"The masculine of it, again."

"I see your point," he acknowledged, "but I still don't like it."

"Oh?" She implied so clearly the question, "What business is it of yours?" that he answered the unspoken rebuke.

"Naturally it's not my concern. I suppose I'm just enough of an Anglo-Saxon myself to think it would be better to be a good daughter than a wilful mistress."

"Not being a woman, you wouldn't know," she told him shortly. "And now perhaps you'd better go and not keep your charming woman waiting."

He had intended to do his own leaving and was furious that he had given her the opportunity of sending him. "Good-bye," he said coldly, and trying to put finality into the phrase.

King stood behind the slammed door for a number of minutes without moving. She wasn't quite sure what

she felt, and the novelty of the experience was confounding. She sometimes changed her mind, though at any given moment her opinion was positive. Her feelings were usually volcanic and never vacillated. She never indulged in worry and had no patience with people who did. Yet she realized all at once that something like apprehension had a part in the conflicting emotions that she was experiencing at this moment.

"What rot!" she said aloud and at once, and proceeded to attack the dishes with distasteful vehemence in the manner of one performing a penitential scourge. "What a fool!" she said a moment later, and knew while she said it that it was quite as applicable to herself as to John.

When Otto Streib arrived she met him with exaggerated enthusiasm. "Darling! How simply marvellous to see you. I've been buried in scullery work. Much less congenial, I might say, than skullduggery."

He held her off and scrutinized her face. He perceived her heightened color, and an indefinable, special brilliance to her eyes.

"He has made you angry, that foolish American," he told her sternly. "Or something else."

She looked back at him with her most innocent expression. "But I've only been looking forward to you—and cursing the slops!" She moved away from him then and he followed her into the living room. "He is a fool," she said over her shoulder. "And he doesn't like

Germans a bit, by the way." She turned, and over the match held to her cigarette, her eyes met his steadily again. "I don't think he'll be the least use," she concluded.

"But that is entirely up to you." His look reproved her. "If he is such a fool, surely you can manage him better than that?"

"I don't know—" Her voice was thoughtful. "He mayn't be that kind of a fool. You know"—her mouth twitched with a grin—"the deaf are always hearing exactly what you don't wish them to hear. Or is that a superstition? In any case, his folly may not be quite so convenient. Perhaps he's just silly enough to be a nuisance, and when it comes to being any good—" She shrugged dismissal.

"Nonsense!" It was not good-humored, and she saw a familiar warning look of anger darkening his eyes. She saw, too, the suspicion which suddenly transplanted it. "Perhaps you are growing to like him," he accused.

"Darling!" It was chiding, and it was also caressing. "Not while I have you. My safety valve!"

"What do you mean by that?"

For answer she went to where he stood and moved against him in an embrace that was deliberately sensual.

In this she was entirely assured. Here her feelings were perfectly defined. They existed within a limit that she understood very well. She enjoyed them or, if occa-

sion required, she made use of them. They never mastered her, and she was wholly undeceived. If she failed to deceive him, she could still control him, and that was all that counted.

Chapter Six

I THINK Ireland is a perfectly beautiful country," John said slowly, "but the Irish people trouble me." He looked at his hostess with a suggestion of apology and a plea for enlightenment. To his surprise she threw back her head and laughed.

"Of course I'll talk about them," she assured him. "Didn't I tell you the other day that there's nothing the Irish love so much as talking about themselves? But I know better than to try to explain them. They're more baffling than the heathen Chinee."

He was prepared to listen to her earnestly. In spite of her laughter it didn't occur to him not to take seriously whatever she said as the understanding of her race and the wisdom of her considerable age. "Do you think it is true," he asked, "that Ireland would be glad to be the mistress of Germany, though unwilling to be the daughter of England?"

Her wide eyes opened wider at that. "Is that original? Because it's rather good." He admitted it wasn't. "What did I tell you," she pointed out triumphantly, "the Irish are telling you about themselves already!"

"But you think there is something in it?" he persisted.

"Certainly. More's the pity!" She said this with such vigor that he was startled. "I have no sympathy with it," she continued. "We've a lot more in common with the French. We're Celts, after all. But chiefly," she added emphatically, "we're ourselves; incomprehensible, certainly, but incomparable, as well."

John had to laugh then. The assurance reminded him of King. And then, it was such a dramatic phrase. Perhaps, for all she was so much older than himself, she, too, could be seduced from the strictest letter of the truth by a mouth-filling generality. Immediately it seemed to him that she relaxed slightly. It was the faintest impression, yet strong. He thought that she had felt a readjustment between them, and knew that there was no longer, to all intents and purposes, a great distance between their years. It made him newly aware of her beauty, and especially of the remarkable freshness of her skin. He had grown used to this Irish phenomenon, doubtless attributable to the weather, that gave elderly women complexions that would be the envy of girls at home. Yet in Madame Powers' case it was particularly striking, perhaps in contrast to her snow-white hair. She wore her hair in a Dutch cut, and it made him think of a choir boy. She couldn't have worn anything that would have become her more than a surplice.

"Why do you laugh now?" she asked him lightly. With her voice she changed from an appealing little

boy to an exciting woman, and he couldn't say what he might have said a moment before.

"It's just that you expressed that so well," he said instead.

"Yes"—she spoke reflectively—"there are lots of reasons for laughter, aren't there? Actual humor is probably one of the least. At any rate, one of the most infrequent."

He nodded in agreement and without thinking reached for the poker that was resting beside him, next to the fire into which they had both been looking. But she reached over and took it from his hand.

"Sorry," she said, "and I don't mind a bit. But I'd better warn you for future reference. You never poke anyone's fire until you've known him for seven years."

"I beg your pardon," he said quickly, uncomfortable and surprised. "I wasn't going to use it," he explained. "I took hold of it without thinking."

"Don't be embarrassed. And I'm glad you feel enough at home to be absent-minded." Her smile put him at ease again.

"But why seven years, particularly?" he asked.

She shrugged. "Superstition, of course. We live so much with fires that we've built up a lot of superstitions around them. You've probably heard that a fire won't burn unless you build it in the sign of a cross with a poker?"

John hadn't. "But that's sensible, isn't it? I'm sure at home I always put the last stick upright, to make it

draw." She nodded, but to his surprise he felt certain that his utilitarian explanation hadn't pleased her.

"Do have another cup," she urged him after an awkward little silence. "And tell me more about yourself. What do you think you'll do when you've found yourself?"

He shifted in his chair. "That sounds so—" He gave it up.

"I didn't mean it unkindly," she assured him. "Of course you've come here to find yourself, and it's very important that you should."

"Thank you," he said gratefully. "It seems so kind of lame to be worrying about yourself when there's so much to be done in the world."

"I shouldn't have put it that way. Yet it's got to be done. How can you start at all if you don't know where you're going? Even where there is to go?"

"That's just what I've thought! Like trying to build a house without a plan. Like"—his confidence was rushing back—"heaven's my destination when you don't even know whether there is a heaven at all."

"You're going to settle that, too?" she asked softly. "Here?" It was as if she had said "of all places," and he looked at her wonderingly. She had finished her tea and sat with the poker still in her hand. Now she stooped to shift the coals in the grate. It struck him that she did it to avoid his eyes. But hers were so steady, always, and full of wisdom. Whenever he had been foolish, she had rescued him with her sympathy.

This time, apparently, she had no help for him, or no intention of offering it, if she was thinking of him at all.

The silence lengthened and John's bewilderment gave place to discomfort. Perhaps he should leave. Perhaps he had stayed too long already. "Don't go yet!" Her words cut across his thoughts, and he started. She still didn't turn from the grate and he had made no move, said nothing. It was as if she had been reading his mind.

"You have the most beautiful voice I've ever heard," he told her shyly, and obviously because he had to. At last she looked at him again. Her wide eyes weren't serene now, nor wise, nor kind.

"To send young men to their deaths!" There was defiance in her voice. "Haven't you heard?" He had, from her detractors. To her admirers she was a great patriot, almost a saint; to the others, a violent agitator to the common destruction.

She stood up, and John thought of a fire leaping. All at once she was a stranger, and famous, someone he had heard all about, no one he had ever spoken to. Even her voice was strange, still beautiful, but changed. As if, he thought, a glass of wine were suddenly held in the light.

"Shall I use it on you?" she demanded. "To send you back to life, perhaps?" She glowed. He thought he had never in his life before seen anyone so wholly alive.

"Yes!" Her eyes held him. He thought he would fol-

low her voice to the ends of the earth, no matter what it was saying. "Out of this country of the dead!"

She leaned forward and put her hands on his shoulders, staring into his face like someone possessed. " 'Tir n'an Og.' The Land of Youth," she translated, and the sarcasm of her emphasis was unmistakable.

She turned away from him as violently as she had first seized him. "The land of saints and martyrs," she said then. "Little honor!" Her voice was searing in its bitterness. "The Irish adore their dead. For themselves, for one another they have really no respect, no liking, and no hope! Only their dead they love, and the dearest wish of their hearts is to be dead themselves."

She had sunk back into her chair by the fire, and for a number of minutes she brooded into it. "This is a bitter land," she said at last, with a quiet weariness. "A thwarted, ingrown people, half mad. Go into Connemara, go into Donegal! Walk in the awful silence of those motionless mountains, where our genius and our insanity are bred. Do you know A.E.?" she broke off to ask him.

"I think often," she continued immediately, "of those lines 'this tragic place where good and evil wear one face, and only the true seer can find the bright star or the dark behind the mask of beauty that all wear.' " Her face and her voice had grown gentle now. "No," she said softly, "you will never understand them. Their problems are not your problems, their struggle is not your struggle, their faith is not your faith. Go back to

that simple country of yours where there is so much sunshine." She smiled at him then, so warmly and simply that he felt as if he had waked from a nightmare into a bright, familiar room. Without having known how tense he had been, he was conscious of relaxing. His hand trembled when he set down his teacup. But before he could summon anything to say, the door into the outer hall opened and another woman came into the room.

There was just enough resemblance between the two women so that John guessed they were sisters before he had been introduced. Norah, however, was somewhat younger, and far less beautiful. This was partly, perhaps, because of her appearance, which must have detracted from any amount of natural good looks. Her hair, long and done up, was frowsy, and in places nearly down. She wore what John first took to be an uncommonly short skirt, but soon realized was a pair of culottes, bright green. Above them she had on a very spotted and worn yellow sweater, shapeless except for its numerous bulges. She acknowledged John's presence with a vague smile, and promptly fell upon the cakes.

"Luck!" she exclaimed childishly. "My favorite cakes. And I very nearly didn't get in. That damned bitch cornered a rabbit in McNeil's field." She bit into a frosted cake and with a good bit of frosting on her chin, suddenly decided to get acquainted with John.

"You're not going?" she asked encouragingly. "I want

to hear all about the States. You *are* an American, of course?"

"It seems to stick out." He smiled.

"What are you doing for fun?" she wanted to know, promptly dropping the States. Before he could answer she was off again.

"Ah, you should have visited Dublin in the days of the Vice-Regal Lodge! There's nothing here now. The balls! May, will you ever forget the first ball we gave?"

Her sister chuckled. "Katie McGoon, God rest her soul, got tipsy on the punch," she explained to John.

"The cook," Norah interposed.

May took it up again. "Didn't I find her, reeling over the bowl and swinging away with the ladle." By this time both women were laughing so hard that John had to laugh with them.

"May asked her what it was she was after," Norah went on. At that they both began to rock with uncontrollable laughter, and the tears streamed down their faces. John began to think he would never hear the end of the story, but it was Norah who finally, between spasms, managed to tell him that the cook had lost her false teeth in the punch bowl.

Funny as it was, John was more astonished than amused, and the nearly hysterical laughter into which it had thrown these two elderly women amazed him even more.

May was the first to recover and became rather abruptly serious after drying her eyes on her tea

napkin. "Here we spend our lives getting rid of the English," she said sternly to her sister, "and you lament the Vice-Regal Lodge."

Norah was unperturbed. "Half of Dublin is lamenting with me—the half that hasn't moved to London," she added with another burst of laughter. "I admit, May," she said placatingly, "that there is no pleasing us. As I forget who said, dissension is our natural element and if we've no one else to fight with, we'll quarrel amongst ourselves." She seemed to find this a highly satisfactory conclusion to the subject and dumping the contents of May's teacup into the slop dish, filled the cup for herself.

"I've had a delightful afternoon," John told his hostess then, because it seemed to be a good time to leave.

"Come again, and we'll have a talk," Norah urged him, as her sister took him to the door.

"Mind what I've told you, now," May insisted, when she was alone with him in the hall. "Go home and get your bearings amongst the people you understand. But if you don't go in a hurry, come to see me again."

The simple friendliness with which Madame Powers had left him was slow to wear off. But it was bound, sooner or later, to give place to reflections upon all that had preceded it. He reviewed the entire conversation and found he could remember it almost verbatim. It seemed to him in retrospect no less strange than it had at the time.

He had started off the afternoon confounded by King

Blake. He was finishing it bewildered by her grandmother. Were all the Irish, he asked himself, completely mad? It struck him with such force, as such a very real possibility that the two women he had just left might very well be mad, that he began to laugh. It wasn't essentially funny, but the shock following on his confusion was unsettling. And there was something comical, if he had been racking his brains for so long to understand the incomprehensible, to make sense out of the senseless, logic from the illogical.

Since he had been in Ireland he had frequently heard the word "enthusiast," and now he wondered if that wasn't their cheerful euphemism for what he would describe as the definitely touched. For all their passion, for all their conflicting faiths and inability to get along even with one another, the Irish had a singular tolerance. Perhaps it was only the cap to their consistent inconsistency. Perhaps their final paradox was a sane estimation of their own insanity, and they were all making the best of it, whenever they remembered to. He didn't know by this time whether he was laughing at them or himself, but he felt lighter than he had felt all day.

Chapter Seven

WHEN he got back to his digs, John found that it was seven o'clock. He found, too, another note thrust under his door. He wasn't surprised. In fact as soon as he saw it, he realized that he had looked for it. It read only: "If you get back by nine, come over to my place."

She was alone, then, he thought, and knew how much he had been afraid of something else. At the house phone in the lower hall he called her to tell her he hadn't eaten, and tea wasn't standing by him.

"I'll feed you. Come along," she told him briefly. Her voice was reserved.

He left his bicycle and set out on foot. It had started to rain just as he had got to his place, and now the fine drizzle was turning into a downpour. He sprinted the last half of the distance, and then shook his hat and trench coat on the doorstep before pushing King's bell.

"Come in," was all she said.

"Shall I hang these over the sink?" he asked.

She had a fire going and a single candle, and the place was more pleasing than it had looked by day. In

the next minute he saw the flowers, a mass of red roses on the table by the grate.

"I'll spread your coat on the fender." She took it from him and he apologized when his wet hand brushed hers. "I suppose you had a lovely afternoon?" she asked him.

"Obviously you did," he retorted, looking at the roses.

She straightened from spreading his coat across the fire guard and then, with one of her characteristically abrupt motions, flung herself against him. "Oh, John, what are we going to do?" She had never used his name before and it stabbed him with a new familiarity. "I don't care about making you jealous. I don't even care who you were with. But there's so little time, and we're wasting it. You'll go back to America any time, and I won't even have got close to you."

He lifted her face and looked at her whimsically.

"You're doing all right."

She loosened her arms from around him. "Don't make fun of me! I nearly went mad all afternoon, trying to be bright and devastating and wondering who the hell you were with." She pushed him into a chair and sat down on the coal box from where she could rest her arms across his knees.

"Did you say something about feeding me?" he asked her.

"I'm sorry." Her face cleared. "You'll never guess what I've got for you. It's a treat, and you're to eat every scrap of it yourself. Get dry while I fix it. I won't

be five minutes." A few minutes later she called in to him. "Can you guess now?"

"Steak," he said, "and possibly mushrooms." He was right, and it was one of the best steaks he had ever eaten.

"Did you have some?"

"Certainly not!" she told him. "I got it just for you. I'm economical, myself. Habit I picked up in Germany."

Germany, again, he thought, while she chattered on about the marvellous way the Germans got on, and how her compatriots were constantly shocking her by their wanton wastefulness. "It just isn't clever—to be extravagant," she finished.

"Except on me?"

"That's to show you how much I love you!"

The word shocked him. "Look, you don't even know me, really," he protested.

"That's what you think. In the first place, I'm older than you."

"Second?" he prompted.

"You're adorably transparent, darling."

"Thanks."

"Anyway," she added philosophically, "women are always cleverer than men." She took the plates away, insisting that she would wash them later, and came back to sit beside him again. "Listen to the rain, and the wind. We get fierce winds here, you know. Maybe this will get so bad you can't get home. I've seen people blow along the streets, knocking into lampposts. It's

really dangerous." She had taken his hand and put her fingers between his.

"If I had a pipe I'd light it, if I had a hand," he told her.

"There are cigarettes beside you, and I'll light one if you'll stick it in your mouth." She reached for a match with her free hand, while he reached for a cigarette with his.

"Oh, darling, it's such fun having you. When do you go back? No, don't tell me. Anyway, perhaps I can make you stay, if you'll give me half a chance."

"King," he said slowly, trying to think as he went along, "it is fun. It's better than that—being with you. Anyway now it is. Sometimes it's hell. And between times I never know what to think. I haven't had much experience with—" he hesitated—"girls. Maybe it wouldn't matter if I had, you're so different from anyone I've ever seen before."

She squeezed his fingers. "Thanks for that, anyway."

"I don't really know what the devil I came here for," he went on. "This afternoon I had tea with a very charming old lady." He paused and looked at King. "Named May Powers."

"You didn't!"

He nodded. "I met her at tea, the day I met you. She doesn't know I know you, by the way, so you can do what you think best about that."

"Thank God for that!" she said fervently.

"She advises me to go home," he continued, "and in many ways I see her point."

"She would!"

"Well, don't be unreasonable. Since she doesn't even know we are acquainted—"

"I don't know," King broke in, "I wouldn't put anything by her."

"But what on earth could her object be?"

She shrugged. "Heaven alone would know that," she said darkly.

"By the way, her sister was there, too. You never mentioned her!"

"She comes and goes. Usually spends the summer. She'll be back to London any time now. She's a butterfly."

John laughed. "So I gathered, though it's rather funny, to see her."

"Well," she prodded him, "get on with your confiteor, or whatever this is."

He scowled and puffed rapidly on his cigarette.

"I don't suppose I will ever make head or tail of the Irish," he brought out finally, "if that's even what I'm here for. I'm certainly getting nowhere in double-quick time with the language."

"Is that what you're doing? I never thought to ask."

"At the moment," he admitted, "my hat is floating on the surface of the sea of old Irish paradigms. They told me I couldn't hope to get anywhere in less than three years, which isn't encouraging. But, hell, I might as

well study that as something I could get at home as well, or better. I got interested in college, in the Celtic origins of English literature, and I've thought some about teaching. Only in the last year or so I've had an idea I wanted something different—more active. This is frankly marking time, of course, till I find out what it is. The point I'm hung up on now is, why not go home and settle down to something useful while I figure out my destiny."

She dropped his hand and got up. "I thought you were coming to that."

"Why?"

"I don't know, intuition, or sheer bad luck which I run to."

"I shouldn't think you were a pessimist."

"I'm Irish." She pulled one of the roses out of the vase and stood twirling it between her fingers. He wondered if it was intentional, like the telephone call of the afternoon. She looked quite innocent, but he decided to find out.

"You mean, if I don't appreciate you, there are those who do?"

She followed his gaze to the rose in her hand. "Oh, the devil," she said irritably and tossed the flower into the grate. He had found out nothing, as usual. "I've got a brother in the States," she surprised him by saying.

"Whereabouts?"

"Boston. He's married to a Boston girl, and a member of her father's law firm."

"That's where I come from."

"I know."

"How did you find that out?"

"Intuition, I expect."

"Rot!" he said. "You're a sleuth. Your grandmother comes rightly by the sinister powers you attribute to her. You've never been to America, have you?"

"I was just thinking about that myself." She sat down on the floor beside him this time. "Why don't I go over when you go back? It's high time I made Jerry a visit. He's asked me often enough." She had hunched up on her elbows until her face was nearly at a level with his: It seemed to him he had been watching her mouth, thinking about kissing her, for minutes before he did. When it happened, he wasn't sure which one of them had moved first.

"Every time I kiss you," he said wonderingly, "it's like the first time."

"Every time I wonder if it will be the last."

They both moved at once, and between them the chair slipped away behind him, and he was beside her on the floor.

"Look," he said desperately, "I want you like all hell, so I suppose I've got to ask you to marry me."

"But—but what a funny thing to say." She looked as if she didn't know whether to laugh or be angry. "It's so, well, old-fashioned, and then it isn't at all."

"It's just honest," he said. He considered for a bit. "I guess I take things awfully seriously," he said at

last. "I've never wanted to marry anyone—before—and, well, I guess I thought it would be different. I thought it would be someone I know terribly well. Maybe someone I've always known."

"Not anyone you want like hell?"

"Well, naturally," he temporized, "if you're in love—"

"And you're not!" she snapped out. "You just want me. And you suspect it's all my doing, in the bargain."

"In a way," he admitted. And then, "Oh, hell, I don't know."

"Can't you ever stop thinking?" she wanted to know. "Do you always have to be infernally analyzing things? What makes you think you're thinking, for that matter? All you've produced is a lot of preconceived notions. Holy God in heaven!" she exclaimed like any pious peasant, "why do I love you at all?"

He roared with laughter at that. "You're very sweet," he said, when he had stopped laughing.

"Now you're being normal. I love your laugh. And I love you when you're cross. Darling, what makes you so horribly modest? Did someone abuse you when you were little? Didn't anyone ever love you before? Are all Americans so damned attractive that no one even notices you? Or maybe modesty is a virtue where you come from? It isn't here! You jolly well get taken for your own value of yourself and the better you like yourself, the better."

"I should think you'd despise me, then."

"I daresay I ought to." She studied him earnestly for a minute. "I expect it's fate," she decided moodily.

"You people are so dramatic." He was amused.

"Not really," she said lightly now. "Any more than we're sentimental. But it's a very effective pose. Are you as uncomfortable as I am?"

"Probably." He helped her to her feet. "What time is it, come to think of it?" he asked.

"Does it matter?"

"Not to me, but it should to you," he teased her.

She looked at her wrist watch. "It's rather late, as a matter of fact. You'd better stay. It's still storming like fury. And you did ask me to marry you, though I've had nicer proposals."

"No doubt. Is it an old Irish custom to sleep with people first and see the priest later?"

She giggled. "Lots later, sometimes. There's a man at college whose parents are only just getting married. It's a little embarrassing since he's gone all the way through with one name, and now he's got to graduate with a new one."

"Are you joking?"

"Good Lord, no. Even I haven't that much imagination. It's Con Delany. Everyone knows about it. He's repulsive but quite intelligent. I don't think he minds much."

Suddenly John yawned. "I'm sorry," he said quickly. "It must be all the fresh air I've had today."

"Darling, you really will have to stay. Anyway, I doubt if your things are even dry." She reached for the button of his jacket and undid it.

"Are you crazy?" he asked her. It was partly fear, though he wouldn't have admitted it to himself, that made him so violent.

"All right!" she said with equal passion. "Go back to your damned digs. Go back to America! I don't suppose I'd want you at all if you weren't so hard to get. If I'm crazy, I'm bored crazy! When I was a kid I used to think that when I grew up everything would be exciting and hard. It isn't. It's worthless and easy. And now damn you, get out!"

John stood and stared at her anew. So this was the explanation that he'd tried so hard to figure out. This was the way she felt. This was what she wanted of him. But instead of being satisfied that he understood her at last, he knew that he was hurt. After all, then, he had half-believed that for some mysterious reason she had fallen in love with him.

King had been staring back at him, and he saw the change that came slowly into her eyes. "Actually, I know perfectly well what's wrong with you," she said softly. "You're afraid of me."

Later, reviewing the results, he might wonder how deliberate it had been. Now he only reacted out of pure emotion. Reaching for her arm, he yanked her against him and kissed her savagely. He intended to hurt her,

physically, if he could reach her in no other way. And then he intended to walk out, leaving her piqued and unsatisfied, as let down as he was himself. But he hadn't counted on the power of pride, together with the desire that she could always arouse in him, and in the end he spent the night.

When he opened his eyes the next morning, King was leaning over him, hunched up on one elbow, and tracing the line of his cheekbone with one finger. "Do you still hate me?" she asked him immediately.

He looked at her solemnly for a minute and then instead of answering her, asked, "Do you know how beautiful you are?"

"I've heard it often enough," she told him simply. "You haven't answered my question. You hated me last night. You called me a bitch. You said if I only wanted what I couldn't have, then I'd jolly well have you and be done with it, and then we'd both be free."

"Did I?" He smiled. "Did I ask you to marry me?"

"You didn't mean it. Besides, that was before you got mad."

He brought her face down to his and kissed her mouth. "This is after I got mad," he said. "Will you marry me?"

She laughed delightedly. "Darling, isn't it quite funny? You ought to be turning me out, and I ought to be beseeching you to make an honest woman of me."

He grinned back at her. "I'm afraid it's too late for

that. But if you feel like beseeching me, I'll give it very serious consideration."

"I do, darling," she assured him. "I implore you to hate me some more the same way!"

Chapter Eight

SHORTLY before she expected John on the following afternoon Kingsley left her digs. It was an impulse that she was unwilling to examine. She had half known all day that she was going to avoid him, but it wasn't until the last half-hour that she got up and went out, without knowing where she would go. After walking for some time and revolving a number of possibilities in her mind, she went around to her brother's hotel.

Gerald and Helen put up every year at the same quiet, unfashionable, wholly Irish hotel. For a number of successive years they had secured the same suite, and it had almost come to seem like their own apartment. King went up without being announced, and Helen opened the door to her.

"Kingsley, how nice," she said, and it was almost cordial. Only King herself, or Gerald, could detect the underlying reserve. "We're just having late tea. Gerald said you'd come into town, and I've been thinking I ought to drop in on you."

"That's courageous of you," King told her with cheer-

ful rudeness. "You might have found me in bed with a German groom."

"King, for God's sake!" Gerald protested, while Helen looked quietly pained.

King dropped into a deep chair. "What have you?" she asked unconcernedly. "If honesty is my only virtue, I must keep that up, mustn't I? How much longer are you staying on?" She accepted a cup of tea, sloughed off her coat into the chair behind her, and stretched out her legs.

"We'd thought another week, perhaps," Helen told her politely. "I'm having the house done over and it won't be ready much before." She smiled at her husband. "Jerry would go mad with painters all over the place."

"You spoil him," King said. "Look at this room—a hotel room that you only occupy for six weeks in the year, and it looks exactly like Jerry. I never could see" —she grinned at him—"how you manage to create so much space and so much clutter side-by-side." It was such an apt and instantaneous description that Helen was nettled, especially as it evidently delighted Gerald.

"I rent the space and put the clutter in," he laughed, while Helen thought that he was always like this with Kingsley, more witty, and somehow detached. He might have said, "We." He might even with justice have said "Helen," for in a sense she had created it all, clearing the space, preserving the clutter, removing the hangings that would shut out the light he loved, never making a

single addition that wasn't exactly what he would have made. She felt so helpless watching them together, looking so much alike, that it made her perverse.

"Everything is Gerald's," she agreed so forcibly that the idea became her own, and instantly both Jerry and King remembered that Helen had a great deal more money than her husband. There was a second's silence before King said:

"I hear you think I should settle down?"

"I think, Kingsley," Helen said severely, "that you are the most independent person I've ever known, and I wouldn't begin to try and plan your life for you."

"Then you didn't put Jerry up to playing the heavy brother? He's all of atwit about my scandalous ways. Aren't you, pet? Or are you only jealous?"

"What on earth do you mean by that?" Helen bridled.

"Stop acting like a brat," her brother said warningly.

"Perhaps," King told them unexpectedly, "I'll come to America after all." She set her teacup on the table beside her chair and prepared to enjoy her effect.

"Not really? You aren't serious?" Gerald leaned forward.

King crossed her knees and her foot began to swing. "A quite charming American wants me to marry him," she threw out.

"Who is he? Anyone we know?" Gerald asked, while Helen said with reserve, "How interesting, Kingsley."

"I believe he's quite rich, and frightfully correct." She gave Helen a covert glance. "And then, he's so beau-

tiful, in a funny, dumb, unconscious sort of way. He's horribly shy. He has the shyest feet in the world. I'd know them anywhere. When he sits he tries to cover them up by putting one on top of the other. When he's standing, he turns them over and tries to bring the soles of his shoes together!"

Helen glanced at her husband. "But he is attractive?" she prodded.

"Hideously. He'd be odious if he knew it. He looks quite like one of those beautiful, cadaverous monks of the Middle Ages. You don't know whether to hurl yourself at his feet, or take him home and feed him up on crackers and milk."

Gerald was inclined to laugh at her, but Helen was clearly embarrassed. "He sounds very strange," she ventured. "Is he intelligent?"

"Not awfully, I'm afraid," King told her pathetically. "He thinks like anything, poor lamb, but I believe he's quite stupid. He's so innocent! I didn't suppose there was anyone left in the world quite so naïve."

"Are you in love with him, Kingsley?"

King rested her head back against the wall. "Everyone isn't like you, Helen," she said more seriously than was usual with her. "I'm not sure I'm capable of being in love. I was supposed to have dinner with him tonight." She stopped.

"Well—?" her brother prompted. "What did you do, just walk out? Isn't that rather a dirty trick?"

"I'm rather a dirty person. And now may I have a cigarette?" She sat up and uncrossed her knees.

"You're a fraud." Gerald got up to give her a cigarette and light it. "If there is such a fellow at all, he probably stood you up."

"Ha! I'd like to meet a man who would. I mean that," she added.

"Play along with the Germans, then," he advised. "They'll roll you in a big way!"

"Unlike the English!" she shot back at him. "Great God, Jerry, can't you see it? Their whole history is nothing but a string of broken promises!"

"Whereas Germany, of course, is going to save us all—with the biggest mass murder in history, the way it looks now."

"There will be no war, unless England makes it—in her role of self-appointed guardian of Europe. Can't you *see*"—her voice rose—"that the only hope for Europe is unity? And England is determined that there will be no unity. She has demonstrated that time after time."

"And Germany has demonstrated time after time that she intends to dominate the world. If you can possibly think the rest of the world ought to go under the Prussian heel—"

"Who's to say?" King interrupted, with an appearance of weariness. "In the long run history will show the answer. If the German heel is bigger and better than any other, well, theories won't have much to do with it, will they?"

"Are you crazy?" he demanded in exasperation.

"Quite the reverse," she assured him. "I'm using my head, not a bundle of prejudices and predigested opinions that I've never examined since they were fed to me. 'God is on the side of civilization,'" she quoted dramatically. "Who says so? And what is civilization anyway? The Bank of England?"

"I suppose you think Hitler is the modern Messiah?"

"I doubt if there are any Messiahs involved," she told him coolly. "I doubt if God has got anything to do with it. It's force against force. One set of rules against another." She broke off to laugh harshly. "You must have an amusing picture of God," she said, "wearing an old school tie and rooting for Our Side."

"Don't be vulgar."

"It's preferable to being stupid."

After a minute Helen said quietly, "I suppose there is an argument for Germany. They haven't England's resources, by a good deal, and they probably feel with some justice that England simply appropriated hers in the first place."

"But we've outlawed that sort of thing now," her husband protested. "There was an age of piracy, of course, and plunder was the order of the day, but we've got beyond that. People, or countries, can't go around just grabbing what they want any longer."

"Convenient timing," King observed drily. "When Britain fills her coffers she calls quits. There are people who play cards that way, but we don't admire them."

"And there are bullies that can't take an honest beating, too," Gerald said, "and we don't think much of them, either."

"An honest beating!" King repeated angrily. "Did you ever take an honest look at the Versailles Treaty?"

"Please, do let's talk about something less controversial," Helen begged them. Out of an honest simplicity she could never understand these two. It seemed to her that they were always either wrapped up in an intimacy that excluded her, and verged on passion, or they were tearing one another apart. "After all," she appealed to her husband, "Kingsley knows a great deal more about the Germans than we do."

She had never yet succeeded, but she continued to try to make a comfortable readjustment, to put King on one side of the fence, and herself and Jerry on the other. But they always made their own fences, and so passionately that they were to all intents on one side, and she on the other. "If you're not having dinner, Kingsley, you ought to eat something more," she went on. "I think there's another egg. Let me fix it for you." She got up. "Some more tea, darling?" she asked Gerald before leaving the room.

"How do you stand it, Jerry?" King asked when they were alone. "You needn't pretend, it's obvious enough. Everything comes back to you. She can't even keep her eyes off you for very long. I'd go mad! I'd rather be in prison, alone!"

"I happen to love her," he said sternly. "A thing you

probably can't imagine. I know," he added after a minute, "Helen isn't clever, or beautiful. She's fairly average, I suppose, in every way but one—"

"You mean the way she feels about you?"

"It happens to be me," he said, with surprising gentleness.

"But, good God," his sister exploded, "if it might as well be anyone—"

"You don't know what you're talking about, King!" he told her sharply. "You're not a man, and you're pretty young still. But you can take my word for the fact that Helen gives me what I want—what any man wants. Damned few are lucky enough to get it."

"Does she have to make it so conspicuous?"

"You're in the family," he reminded her. "Besides, you make it worse. That's natural enough."

"If there's anything natural about it," she said. "Oh, well, one man's meat is another man's suicide. Or murder."

He had lighted a pipe and now sat back comfortably. "I think you are wrong," he said patiently. "Love isn't a game. Oh, I guess when I was a kid I thought it was exciting to chase some girl that wanted to play hopscotch. Maybe I'd still think so if I didn't know anything better. The thrill of the chase!" He laughed shortly. "Do you get tired of eating?" he asked her. "Do you think it would be more fun if you never knew where your next meal was coming from? Maybe you're just loony enough to feel that way, but I doubt it. Not

with your appetite!" He expected her to laugh with him. He was wholly unprepared for the grim earnestness with which she looked back at him.

"I hope to God I would!" she said. "Starve, and freeze, and sleep in a ditch with the rain pouring on me. Not for fun!" The upward curve of her lips seemed more pronounced than usual. "And not for some footling little love that's just another name for comfort!"

He was about to interrupt, but he realized that she was looking not at him, but through him, speaking for herself more than for him. She was looking hypnotized, possessed as he had seen his grandmother possessed.

"For freedom!" she said. "For that simple necessity that is every man's birthright, and that no one has yet purchased with all his pains! Not for myself—not even just for Ireland. For India! For Asia! For every pitiful colony in Britain's charnel empire! Holy God in heaven, save me from the perdition of safety while that slavery prevails!"

Helen had come back and was standing in the doorway, though neither of them was aware of her presence. "I know what you're thinking," King went on, but still as if she were talking to herself, "that I'm a rotten sensualist. That I live for excitement. That half the time I'm bored to extinction. But that doesn't *matter*. It isn't really important! I can still tell the chaff from the grain. And I'm not getting into any bed for good!" All at once her eyes focused on him again. "I'm not getting into anyone's bed for good," she repeated violently, "espe-

cially a great big beautiful American bed with inner spring mattresses!"

Helen came into the room with a covered dish that she set down on the table beside King. "I believe, Kingsley," she said quietly, "that you've fallen in love after all."

"You would." King accepted it without argument, almost with indifference. Her emotional outburst over, she was once more her normal, casual self. It was as if she had never been otherwise.

"Well," Gerald pointed out reasonably, "you certainly protested yourself."

King began to eat the egg hungrily, and poured herself a second cup of tea. "You're right, Jerry," she said presently, "we're all mad." It was calmly good-humored. "This tastes good. Did you ever poach an egg in cream?" She addressed Helen. "I'll do one for you sometime, when I retire and devote myself to the pleasures of the table." She grinned amiably at them both. "I'm not keeping you from anything?"

Helen glanced at Gerald. "We were planning to go to the Gate," she said. "Would you care to join us? I'm sure Jerry could get another seat."

King shook her head. "I think I'll do some work this evening, for a wholesome change."

"Then, if you'll excuse me, I'll go and change. Don't let me hurry you, though." Helen left them again.

For a comfortable moment King and Gerald smiled

at one another. "You're rather nice when you're being restful," he said.

"Which isn't often?" His silence admitted it. "Does that matter so much to you? Being restful?"

"I suppose it does. It's hard come by, you know."

"I don't know. I've never looked for it."

"And I suppose I have." He removed his pipe from his mouth and sat holding it. "It used to be such hell at home. You wouldn't remember. You were too young. And then you were always away at school. Granny—"

"Yes?" She continued to lounge, head leaning back, seemingly in complete relaxation, but her voice was suddenly alert.

"I don't know. Let's be peaceful for once."

"Were you mad about her?" she persisted, her voice probing, too urgent.

"I suppose I was, in a way."

"You were, then! There's no 'in a way' about it. Not with her! Not with us."

"That was such a long time ago, King. Let's forget it."

"You wouldn't have to say that if you had forgotten it. If you could forget it. Am I really like her—to you, I mean?" She watched his eyes shift.

"Hell, no!" His voice was too hearty. "You're just a smart-aleck kid. Not so smart as you think you are. You'll see!"

"You mean she'll get the better of me the way she did you?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"That's why you can't stand it here." Her voice was very quiet now, even with confidence. "You're still running away, and pretending like hell you like it."

"Stop being hysterical, King. We come back every year for the horse show."

"That's very courageous of you. The horse show's a dangerous encounter. Why don't you come back for Granny? Why don't you come back for me? Why didn't you wait for me in the first place?" She was sitting very straight. "We should have gone together, if we had to go. You know it as well as I! Better still, we should have stayed together." In one motion she slid to the floor to kneel beside his chair. "It still isn't too late, Jerry! Don't go back. You belong here, darling, and there's nothing we can't do together. Even Granny couldn't beat the two of us!"

His forehead smoothed in almost a smile. Encouraged she went on. "I *do* understand about Helen! I've learned that much lately, at least. I might nearly do it myself, if I was always alone. But not with you, Jerry! Any more than you'd have done it if you'd had me." The frown returned, only deeper.

"But it's done, King. I've done it already. I've been doing it for ten years. I owe—"

"You owe what you understand," she interrupted. "Our particular responsibility is the thing that no one but us can do. You've said it might as well be anyone with Helen. But with me—with Ireland—it can't be anyone else!" Her eyes had been searching his throughout

and now she said, very softly, "I dream about us, Jerry. My recurrent dream. It always starts with Granny, and that's hell. And then you're there—" What she saw in his eyes all at once made her put her head down in the bend of his arm. "Oh, thank God, thank God, thank God," she said.

After a minute he touched her hair awkwardly. "We get into each other's brains now and then," he said. "Just because we're Irish, I expect, and too much alike. I know. And Helen knows, too, in a way. She doesn't understand it, and it hurts her." His hand tightened on her head, and then he withdrew it. "You're wrong about one thing," he said in a changed voice. "I'm not hard enough. I couldn't do it."

She raised her head slowly. "If you're soft, then be soft for me, darling." He didn't turn his face, or move, except to close his eyes. "There's nothing Helen gives you—" She knew at once her mistake but it was too late. He had got to his feet. "Helen," he shouted. "What the hell is keeping you? Aren't you dressed yet?"

King got up more slowly. She gathered her coat out of her chair. For a minute she stood holding it and then she put it on. At the door she turned to look at her brother again. "Have a nice time at the theater, darling," she said, and let herself out.

Chapter Nine

KING walked home indirectly and slowly. The setting sun was slanting across the city laying the long shadows of Dublin's innumerable steeples down every other street. It was a time of day she liked with an obscure, solitary part of her nature. She liked the untrafficked quiet of the city, the streets empty, the sidewalks swarming with children. Nowhere, she thought, were there so many children, and such dirty, ragged and beautiful children. Their bright heads gleamed like fresh coins, copper and gold, and remarkably were untarnished by all the soil of the city. Any amount of grime failed to obscure their lovely, luminous skins. Now alert on their own affairs, incurious of others, they scrambled across her way and she moved like a ghost among them.

She had lived enough away from it so that Dublin was almost a strange city to her. She saw it in the vivid way that it is impossible to see what has become too familiar. But she saw it, too, with all the pity and affection of rooted living. As if returning to a relative from whom she had been long absent she was now startled

by strangeness, now stabbed with familiarity. But she was always alive to it, and spent much time exploring and revisiting the waterfront, the quay along the Liffey, the steep, winding alleys of the slums. She saw the abysmal neglect, and she saw the original beauty that underlay it. It filled her with contempt and a fierce protective love. She knew that what she saw was not the poverty of oppression alone, but native sloth in nearly equal parts, sloth that wrought decay and bred disease.

There was much in the day's traffic that appalled her. She never grew accustomed to the butchers' shops so that she could pass unaffected the sides of meat that hung in the open and were the attraction of innumerable flies. She stopped often to watch the bakers' delivery trucks piled with their unwrapped loaves. At every stop the bare bread rolled in the street and was recovered for the next delivery regardless of what had adhered to it. She knew that the milk in the giant tins, from which each customer's portion was drawn in the street, was unpasteurized. It all made her sick and angry, and there were times when she didn't know whether she lusted more to fight the enemy or the Irish. She felt at these times like the crazed women who roamed the Dublin streets shouting curses and imprecations broadside and without distinction. They seemed to her then like seers, passing the only possible judgment, that of indiscriminate rage, on the senseless scene that surrounded them. And if anyone in the world had

agreed with her she would have struck him dead on the spot.

But tonight she only walked quietly amongst the children between the Gothic shadows and before the Georgian doorways, and saw what she wanted to see.

Her own digs were not far from the University in a neighborhood whose dignity had not fallen to decay. She had taken what was known as a garden apartment, the rooms level with the street, the windows opening on a little plot of grass and flowers that separated the house from the sidewalk. In another part of the city they would be basement rooms, and undesirable. The garden gave them charm, and they had the privacy of a separate entrance.

It was dusk when King turned the corner into her street, but she still half-expected to see John on her doorstep, and approached the house cautiously. There was no one in sight and she let herself in with a mingled sense of relief and disappointment. Immediately she took herself to task, for an unwillingness to be alone, for a disinclination to study, and beyond that she refused to think. The room looked bare to her. She had brought none of her possessions in from Greystones except for a few books. She went to the mantlepiece now where she had ranged her books between two supporting vases filled with water but empty of flowers. For a moment she was more conscious of the empty vases than the books. Well, it was too late to remedy it tonight.

John had never brought her flowers. And now he probably never will, she told herself. She thought about his room, which was barer than her own, and less pleasing altogether. She could imagine how he must have set out, helpless and uncertain, and taken the first place he looked at. She might take some flowers to him. Stock, she thought, white and cinnamon-scented. "Oh, hell!" she said aloud, and fixed her attention on the titles before her. Definitely she was not up to the *Critique of Pure Reason.* The morass of pure emotion would be more like it, she told herself scornfully.

Five minutes later she put down the poetry of Rilke. She had remembered a theory of Thomas Mann's, expressed in a short story. To not will, he had written, was more powerful than to will not. And she had been willing-not with all her strength. Very well, she would stop struggling. She would stop making such a ridiculous stand against what was, after all, a passing flair. It had happened before and it never lasted. The wild enthusiasm with which she launched on anything new would give way, sooner or later, to her customary boredom. She could afford to invite it. She would give in. She would just be indifferent and will nothing. She might even, she decided finally, go round to his place tonight.

She had got into her trench coat when the doorbell rang. For a minute she hesitated and then slipped it off before going to the door. It was certain to be John, and with her sense of satisfaction something warmer

began to rise as well. But the man in the doorway was Otto Streib.

"Oh!" In her surprise she simply stood and looked at him.

He looked back at her and a grin spread over his face. "I like you," he said heartily. "Look how you stand there—so bold, so defiant." He gesticulated widely with his arms. "Most women, they clutch the door, they peer around it. But not you! You fli-i-ing it open"—he imitated her gesture—"and let go. And there you are. Just you. Just so. Hanging onto nothing, looking the world in the eye. Who is out there? What do you want? If I like you, you can come in. If I don't, you can go to hell."

"I'm not decrepit," she said simply. "Come in." She turned, leaving him to close the door behind himself. At a small table near the fireplace, she stooped and selected a cigarette. Still with her back to him she lighted it. "What's on your mind?" she asked, turning at last. "Sit down, if you like."

"You are on my mind, naturally," he teased her. "How can I think of anything else?" He took the room's most comfortable chair.

"Still, if I know you, there's always a little room left for business."

"You were expecting someone else, perhaps?" he asked, with sudden shrewdness.

"How intuitive you are." Her words were weighted with sarcasm. "It couldn't be possible, could it, that I'm

just in a foul mood? That I might not want to see anyone? After all, you might have let me know you were coming."

"Look, liebchen"—he decided to ignore her mood—"how would you like a little outing? I thought we might go up to Balbriggan for the day. We could cycle. Or I might get a car, perhaps."

"That's an odd choice for an outing. What's the object?"

"You remember I told you that we were looking for a camp for the children? Fräulein Hirsch—you've met her I think? She has charge of the girls." She nodded. The organization of the German children in Dublin, children of the diplomatic and business people, was no concern of hers, but she had inevitably run into them through his activities. The boys were all organized under Streib, with leaders and under-leaders. Fräulein Hirsch had charge of the girls. "She has found a site in Balbriggan," he told her.

"And you want to look it over. Where do I come in?"

"But," he protested innocently, "I only thought we could make a holiday."

"You didn't by any chance think I could arrange it for you? You aren't, for example, running into difficulties in securing the camp?"

"Sometimes," he complained, "I think you are a very hard woman. It has all been arranged. We have secured

the place. Of course"—he made a belittling gesture—"it is still to be furnished—"

"Oh. And what do you think I can do about that? I'm not in the furniture business. I don't even know anyone in the furniture business."

"It's not like that at all," he defended quickly. "We have only the need of some mattresses, a little bedding—" He shrugged in deprecation. "Naturally it would be hardly worth while to invest in these things. If we could borrow them—from the university, perhaps. There is the women's hall, only half occupied."

"Quite," she said crisply. "And the warden is a friend of mine. To be brutally realistic, she's a friend of my grandmother's, and I've never got on with her. But that, of course, is a mere trifle. I will go right around and court her madly, and snatch the bedding while she swoons at my feet. Did you ever encounter the warden, by the way?"

"She's difficult?" He frowned thoughtfully.

"She belongs in John-of-God's—the local insane asylum," she elucidated. "And from what you know of the *sane* Irish, maybe that will give you an idea?"

"You don't think Fräulein Hirsch, perhaps—she has great charm, you know."

King threw back her head and roared with laughter. "Sure," she said, suddenly cheerful, "I'll introduce them if you like. It ought to be quite a show. But don't say I didn't warn you. She'll very likely murder you on sight, and then ask what you've come for."

"I knew I could count on you," he expanded happily. "Then that is settled. When shall we visit the camp?"

"Your faith is touching," she told him, "but I suggest you take my advice and see the warden first."

"Very well. I'll leave it for you to arrange." He got up and she watched, without moving, while he crossed the room to where she still stood by the fireplace. But when he put out his hand to touch her, she moved to avoid him. He folded his arms instead, and for a minute they regarded one another.

"You know," she said unemotionally, "I always forget how ugly you are."

"But you like it." He was assured. "The pretty little American boys are not for you."

"Americans are notoriously good to their women."

"They spoil them. And only see how unhappy their women are—always getting divorces. It's ridiculous. They make fools of themselves in that as everything else."

"Whereas the Germans know how to treat women?" she mocked him.

"Plainly. They permit them to fulfill their natural functions and that is the only true freedom. We do not impose discipline on women or anyone else. We only submit to the natural laws which control us all. You, for example, are too free, and it only makes you unhappy."

"Look at Ireland!" She had dropped mockery for complete seriousness. "She has certainly never suffered from too much freedom!"

"Ah, yes! But in a way it is true of the Irish as well. They have no unity. The Blue Shirts! Bah, what nonsense! We were told to expect something of them, but they are nothing. A mere handful and quite powerless. For unity there must be discipline, and the Irish cannot agree with one another, and will not submit to anyone. Every man must have some notion of his own, and fight his neighbors for it. How can they resist an enemy with chaos and internal disorder? They must be taught to unite, to suppress their individual differences for the common good."

She knew it, far better than he. She accepted it with silence. There was no argument.

"Come out and have a nightcap with me," he suggested after a bit. But she shook her head.

"I'm turning in now," she told him. She slipped her arm through his and walked him to the door. He made no further attempt to touch her. It was partly his conceit, as she knew, that required her cooperation, even her initiative, but it was a delicate preference as well, and she respected it. "Perhaps I'll be out to the stable tomorrow," she told him before shutting the door.

Chapter Ten

On the evening of the appointment that King hadn't kept, John had waited for her for nearly two hours, although beyond the first half-hour he had little doubt that she wasn't coming. His mind told him with equal certainty that her absence was quite intentional. He knew her well enough to know how seldom she would be at the mercy of chance. Since there was no rule that she was unwilling to break in favor of her whim, she had in large measure immunity from the whims of circumstance. He had gone off at last in the assurance that she had deliberately avoided him, and that she intended it to be final. She had never treated him with coquetry. She had always been completely direct.

He sat, on the following day, in his class in beginner's Gaelic and was unable to concentrate. The subject had already begun to discourage him. No one else in the course was quite such a rank beginner. At least they were all Irish and had some aptitude for the language. The first principles eluded him. He could find no connection whatsoever between the written and the spoken

word. He could never imagine beforehand that an elaborate ten-letter word should be pronounced as the briefest monosyllable.

He thought about Kingsley Blake. Then he told himself, honestly, that she had come to obsess his interest to the exclusion of everything else. In view of her sudden withdrawal, the realization was especially alarming, and he began to cast about in his mind for some path of escape.

It was going to be necessary to fill his time, to occupy his mind more thoroughly than study could do, or social diversion. He thought all at once of the letters he had with him. He could remember offhand only that there was one to the Minister for Defense. It seemed as good a place as any to start.

He had considerable curiosity about the men who ruled the new Ireland. Despised by the Anglophiles, rejected by the Republicans, he wondered where they really stood in relation to England? In relation to Europe, especially now that Europe was seething with imminent war? There was the leader who refused to wear a top hat because it was British. What could you make of that but childish perversity? Especially since the fellow was not loathe to wear a bowler. To be truly consistent he ought, like the old man who walked the streets in the guise of Brian Boru, to have dressed in kilts and a tam o'shanter. It was impossible to make any assumptions, and John finally went to see the Minister for Defense with an open mind.

The man wasn't prepossessing. He looked not merely small but stunted. His feet were too large for his body, his ears too large for his head. Only his eyes were too small, even for his shrunken face, and altogether too active. He was not a fortunate introduction to the leaders of Ireland.

"I'm afraid I haven't much excuse for intruding on you," John told him at once. "I'm not much better than a tripper, really."

The Minister spoke up quickly to tell him that he had come very well recommended. "You're a journalist, I believe?" he added.

"Hardly that," John said honestly. "I did a bit while I was at college, for one of the Boston papers, and they did suggest I might do an occasional story while I'm here."

"Story about what?" The man was more than direct.

"Oh"—John was vague—"there must be any number of stories to be had. America is full of Irish, as you know. Boston, in particular. And there's nothing they love so much as the land they've left. Now the world is teeming with unrest, boiling on the brink of another war. What about Ireland? The land of saints and martyrs—"

Before he could complete the borrowed phrase, he was interrupted by a voice from behind him. "Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, it's with O'Leary in the grave."

John spun around. There was a second's hesitation before the young man seated at a desk in an alcove

added, "Yeats, nineteen-thirteen," in the factual manner of one giving the vintage of a wine.

From his original position beside the Minister's desk the alcove was hidden behind John. He had not seen it on entering the room, and might have missed it altogether. It just held a desk and a straight-backed chair, so placed that anyone seated at the desk should have had his back to the rest of the room. The young man who occupied the chair now was sitting sidewise, either to accommodate his long legs or from habitual negligence, which his whole bearing suggested. By a slight turn of his head, he could either attend his work or survey the room. When his voice made John turn their eyes met, and John wondered if he had been watched from the outset.

He was aware of the Minister muttering beside him. "Dead and gone! Good thing if some other things were dead and gone." He raised his voice to add the question, "You done with that letter I gave you?"

"Easily." The answer was given in a cheerful drawl. The fellow was evidently acting as secretary to the Minister, but it was equally obvious that he was there on some freer footing than the conventional one. John turned back with reluctance. The younger man was one of the most arresting he had ever seen, and presented in every aspect a contrast to the Minister. Uncommonly tall, extraordinarily handsome, there was in his whole carriage the ease of a vast self-assurance. Coming back to the Minister, John found him even

more shriveled and yellowed, and he was certainly far more ill at ease.

"University," he mumbled, as though compromising with an introduction. His tobacco-browned fingers moved nervously amongst the papers on his desk. "Gives them the big head," he grumbled further. "For poetry to rattle round in. Romantic Ireland!" He pronounced an a like an e.

Whatever the relationship between these two, it was far more satisfactory to the young man than the elder.

"Still," the voice from the alcove broke in again, "I quite realize that my education's only commencing. And under these auspicious circumstances, in the radiance of your effulgent personality, who knows?" John shifted his chair as imperceptibly as possible so that he could see both men with more ease.

"Blether!" The Minister uttered it sharply. The one thing he seemed incapable of was ignoring the fellow. "You can always get on with that back file, you know," he reminded him.

"Oh, rather!" The fellow leaped to his feet and crossed the room with such exaggerated enthusiasm that John smiled in spite of himself. The Minister cleared his throat.

"Now perhaps we can get on without interruption," he said dourly. "What you want to know, of course, is where we will stand when Europe goes to war."

"When, not 'if'?" John put in.

"Let's not deceive ourselves," the man said with a

touch of impatience. "Ireland will stand clear," he went on. "She will maintain neutrality. The only possible position for her."

"You think that it is possible?" John asked quietly. "With your proximity to England—"

"You will have to let us be the judges of that!" the Minister interrupted. "Outsiders are fond of trying to draw us into theoretic arguments as to the issues involved. All that is entirely beside the point. The situation, for us, is a simple, factual one, of resources, of strength real and potential. All perfectly demonstrable," he finished crisply, while John marveled at the manner in which all his questions had been turned aside before he had even got a chance to ask them. The man was shrewd. He was also very well aware of the situation and its theoretic terms. John wished he had been quicker himself.

With all speculative discussion closed to him, there was only one question which he could reasonably ask. "I understand," he said, "that there is an organization known as the Republican Army—"

Before the Minister's voice cut across his own, he was aware of the younger man's sudden immobility as he stood, folder in hand, beside the files across the room.

"You have been misinformed," the Minister told him curtly. The young fellow at the files had relaxed and assumed his work. John wondered if he had imagined that frozen second in which the raised arm had stiffened in mid-action. He looked back into the hard, narrowed

eyes of the Minister and waited for him to explain what seemed on the face of it to be an arrogant lie. When the silence had lengthened dramatically, and before it had become tedious, the explanation came.

"The organization to which you refer has been outlawed for years." Again John waited, but this time there seemed to be nothing further forthcoming. "How long do you plan to stop here?" the Minister asked him then, and for the first time offered a cigar.

"I'm not just sure. I'm enrolled at the university."

"U.C.D.?"

"No, Trinity."

"Where you putting up?" The conversation ran out in trivialities of convention, and John felt himself being dismissed.

It was nearly tea time. The chances were very good that the secretary would be coming out. John found a reasonable lounging spot in view of the door and got out his map of Dublin. If the Minister should emerge, he was prepared to duck. There was nothing further to be got out of him and to reappear would only make himself ridiculous. The secretary, on the other hand, was a piquing possibility.

He had waited about twenty minutes and was beginning to get discouraged when the door to the Minister's office opened, and the Minister's secretary came out into the corridor. After a second's uncertainty, he came in John's direction. Dangling the open map in one hand, John began to walk toward him.

"Hello," he called out just before they met. "I've been having a hell of a time with this map. I was just coming back to see if the Minister could put me right. He recommended the Royal Hibernian, you know, in case I wasn't satisfied with my digs. By the way, are you leaving? If I went along with you, maybe you could straighten me out?"

"By all means." Once more John had the impression of a young man completely at home in the world. Carelessly good-humored, he seemed not in the least the sort one would look to for any enlightenment beyond the name of a good tailor or the location of a bar. "I'm just going out for a nip, as a matter of fact," he added. "Tea time, you know. Won't you join me?" It was plainly a polite afterthought, but John accepted gladly.

"Come to think of it, you must have the advantage of me. I don't know your name," he told him.

"Leary. And it's pronounced neither Leery, nor Lairy, but with equal value to both vowels." He repeated it with a slow grace that gave it more beauty than John would ever have thought it could have.

"You agreeable to a pub?" he asked then. He walked as though he were unwilling to put any effort into it, and time was of no consequence.

"You have a pretty good time at your job, I should think," John suggested.

"Not bad at all. And awfully amusing."

"Have you been out of college long?"

"June. This is my apprenticeship, in a way."

"Are you going in for politics?"

"I am if the old man doesn't queer me first."

"You mean the Minister? I couldn't quite make him out, to tell you the truth," John said. "He gave me the brush all right."

"Oh, he's great, really. Only he doesn't know it and thinks he is Great. See what I mean?" He went on before John could tell him that he wasn't sure he did. "He'd like to be old-school. Resents me rather, because he thinks I am. Puts on an awful front and tries to be the man of destiny. But he's the stuff, really. Backbone of the country, and all that. I mean it!" He turned to show the most serious expression that John had seen on his face. It changed completely for the moment the impression of a graceful dilletante, and stirred John's curiosity further.

"There's a lot of nonsense about the people," he continued. "They carry the rest of us, really, no matter how it looks. Don't you agree with me?"

John smiled at him with a new warmth. "What about the man of genius?" he countered. "Don't you believe in him at all?"

"Oh, quite! Here we are, by the way." John followed him into the public house and the hum of voices silenced them both until, at the back of the room, they found an empty booth to sit down in.

"Here we are," Leary said again. "With the backbone all around us. A little damp, temporarily, but that only gives it resilience. What are you drinking?"

His shouted order reached the bartender whose shout in turn brought the single waiter, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, up from a neighboring booth. Even for a pub the place was inelegant. It had seemed to John on entering, a strange setting for the elegant Leary. Yet a number of the patrons had nodded their incurious recognition in his passage across the room. Now the waiter, setting down their glasses with a curious twist of the wrist that seemed to just miss overturning them, mumbled, "Your health, Timmy," before turning away.

"Your health," Leary repeated, looking at John. "There's no tipping here," he said presently, "but if you find you can't finish it's not taken amiss."

"You were going to say something about the man of genius," John reminded him.

"So I was. It's my opinion he's the complete man of the people. The voice of the masses. Or the masses made vocal. Nothing else would be understood, and would finally fall into oblivion."

"It's a theory. Yet, take the Minister. You say he doesn't understand you—"

"Not exactly," Leary corrected him. "He resents me, rather, because he's been led astray. He's been partially enlightened and can just see the difference betwen us, without being able to evaluate it. And without seeing the similarities. Snobbery is the curse of us all. The great falsifier. The big half-truth." He paused to swallow the remainder of his whiskey in a gulp.

"If I get you," John took it up, "you believe in the commonplace. You exalt the ordinary. Then where do you fit? Where does the extraordinary, the educated, the self-conscious fit?"

Leary grinned, paused long enough to bellow a second order, and said, "Logically, I can't fit us anywhere. Unless it is to unenlighten the enlightened. My destiny is doubtless to return the Minister to his original level, to restore him to his heritage of sublime commonplaceness."

"And how do you propose going about that?"

"Possibly by being a horrible example. In the long run that ought to be effective. At present he despises me in equal proportions as he secretly admires me. But it's impossible for anything to remain forever in a state of equilibrium. One side or the other is bound to tip the scales. Now I'm banking on the natural superiority of his heritage to tilt them in the proper direction."

John studied him for a number of seconds. "I wonder if you'd swap with him," he reflected aloud.

Leary laughed. "Certainly not. I haven't the proper background, you see. To have the good sense to choose his lot, I should require the good luck to have had his inheritance."

"So you're making the best of things by trying to emulate him?" John emphasized his meaning by the merest glance at the scene around them.

The waiter returned, and this time it was Leary who said, "Your health, Pete." The man grinned, skipped off

in an unusual hurry and was presently back beside them with a third glass. He drained it at one gulp, standing over them.

"Your health, Timmy," he said, in a louder tone this time, "and the health of all your family." He set the emptied glass down beside theirs with a smart thump and left them once more.

"Not at all," Leary protested quickly, and as if their conversation had never been interrupted. "Simplicity is the one thing there's no imitating. And that's got a great deal to do with its value, if you come to think of it." He stopped and a sudden youthful shyness came into his eyes. "You don't think I'm a poseur, do you?" he asked almost humbly. "I like it here," he added. "I like the Minister, in spite of himself. We can't change what we are, but we can stick out for what we believe in. We can use our minds, even if our emotional patterns are made for us."

"I haven't been out of college any longer than you have," John told him, and then stopped. "By the way," he asked with a new briskness, "where did you say you went?"

"Don't believe I said. Trinity. Why?"

"Oh, I just wondered." It was a little too suddenly casual. "I was thinking of someone who must have been there at the same time. Did you—" He tried to conceal his eagerness, and gave it up. "Did you happen to know Kingsley Blake?" he asked in a rush.

Again there was, or he thought there was, a frozen

second before the other man spoke. But his casual, light voice denied it. "Oh, rather. Jolly girl. Where'd you know her? I thought you'd just come over."

For a minute John felt dizzy. It took him by complete surprise. It was a physical sensation, as if he had lost his wind. Or as if he had come face to face with Kingsley Blake herself where he hadn't expected to find her, and just as he had momentarily forgotten her. It was as if, he told himself, she didn't really exist. If she were someone he had imagined, and she had suddenly materialized as a reality, he might have had exactly this reaction. Or if he were in love with her.

He very nearly apologized. He very nearly said, "Silly of me, isn't it, but she—" But of course it didn't show. Leary had no idea what Kingsley Blake meant to him. He took another gulp of whiskey.

"Never did, really," he said, and drew a normal breath again. It had sounded perfectly all right, exactly light enough without significance. And then he had to spoil it by not letting well enough alone. "She has a brother in America." He felt himself under the necessity of explaining, lying, really. It made him uncomfortable and he was further discomforted by the belief that he had roused Leary's suspicions.

He looked down at Leary's fingers on his whiskey glass. They were dark brown, like the Minister's. It was hard to tell whether his glass was empty or not. Did people here smoke so much, or was it something in the air that made them stain worse? Moisture, no doubt.

Did he imagine it now or was Leary holding his glass in an unnecessary grip? Underneath the fellow's appearance of negligence there was a bright hard core of perception. John was certain by this time that Leary was watching him, some wariness roused to suspicion.

"You knew her brother in the States?" he asked, and John was made curious now. Why had he waited so long to ask that simple question? What on earth had gone through his mind? What remarks had he rejected before deciding on the simplicity of an unrevealing question?

"It seems to surprise you," John said.

"Not at all. Why should it?" It was quick. He was rapidly revolving his glass between his fingers and John could see now that it was empty. "I knew her a bit at college, but I never kept up with her." He was explaining, protesting, really. "She was a great charmer, and a bit wild, I believe. But a jolly girl, all the same. All kinds of spirit!" There was no doubt in John's mind any longer. They were watching one another, each concealing while he tried to make the other reveal. "Have another?" Leary invited.

"Do you mind telling me," John began, trying to focus his mind on something else, "just where Ireland does stand in relation to Germany?" It was not the question he would have chosen at that juncture in the conversation if his self-command had been better. It was too close to Kingsley Blake. It might even, he considered swiftly, be too close to Leary's suspicions. But

he had grasped at it in his confusion, and now it was too late to go back. At least it brought a direct look from the other man.

"That's a straightforward question," Leary said. "I hope you're prepared for an honest answer?"

"If you want to answer at all, I'm sure you'll answer honestly," John told him, but with an uncomfortable sense of not being quite certain what he had meant.

"What I'm getting at," Leary explained, "is that you may already have your own answer." His eyes were frankly searching now. "Don't misunderstand me, but people quite often ask questions in order to prove their own points. And no matter what they are told, they interpret it to mean just what they had thought in the first place. I don't mean to put you in the wrong. I'd just like to be sure you aren't going to get me wrong. It's important to me, and it's very complex." He spoke slowly, but with a nervous tension back of the words. John thought the subject upset him, and he was afraid of doing it injustice. He thought it was probably this, and not any personal feeling, that gave such intensity to his speech.

"How much do you know of the history of Ireland? In my experience, outsiders generally know very little. But they expect us to say 'yes,' and 'no,' and 'this is the way it is,' as though it were all very simple and a matter of common knowledge. I gather that you expect me to tell you that Ireland is pro-German?" He shot out the

question with a sort of awkward violence, almost defiantly.

"Yes, I do," John said truthfully. "I'd like to know, at any rate, what it amounts to, this peaceful penetration that I've been hearing so much about."

The bartender had caught Leary's brief shout, and now the waiter brought two more whiskeys. This time both men were too absorbed to acknowledge his presence and only reached automatically for their glasses.

"America, I believe," Leary began in what seemed a digression, "is known as the melting pot of the world. Isn't that the phrase? Good one, too. You receive Italians, Swedes, Irish, French, and, I assume, Germans?" The irony was lightly inflected. "Since they go there peacefully, I suppose you might describe it as a peaceful penetration? So what, to use an Americanism?"

"Well, of course. I mean to say—"

Leary grinned at his discomfiture.

"However," John said, suddenly collecting himself, "they all become Americans! That's the idea. It's rather different."

"Well, if it comes to that, lots of Germans have married amongst us. Of course, all this is somewhat beside the point, isn't it? It's the sympathies that count. And certainly there is a good deal of sympathy between us and the Germans. In some cases it may go further than that, I don't deny. But what you're interested in is the official relationship, rather than isolated, individual cases."

"No, not exactly," John interrupted to correct him.

"Well, then perhaps you're trying to gauge the possible extent of a possible pro-German influence, in the advent of a possible war? Pretty theoretic, don't you think? What of your own country? Can you say where the sympathies of your own German element may lie under the same circumstances? Can any country cope with its subversive elements until they have actually become subversive? That's what it amounts to, isn't it?"

"Then," John asked him, "you *would* regard any pro-German activities in Ireland, in time of war, as subversive?"

"If Ireland should be involved in the war with Germany as her enemy, certainly."

"But Ireland never will engage in a war against Germany? Is that it?"

"I don't think Ireland will engage in a war at all. You have the Minister's opinion on that. Why should she? Unless she is attacked, and that's more than unlikely. What would anyone have to gain? We are not a power in international politics, and our resources are negligible. As you know, our chief export has always been people that we can't take care of ourselves."

"I realize," John agreed, "that Ireland has nothing for another nation to covet except"—and he emphasized it with his voice—"a strategic position. Ireland would make an admirable springboard for attack on England. As a base for submarine and naval warfare in general, she

can hardly be surpassed. These things are just as vital as raw materials to the machinery of war. There was a precedent in the last war—"

"Yes, of course." Leary cut him short. "An individual case. Every country had them. As I've said, we can't anticipate them. If they never occurred, there'd be no need for the counter-espionage that all countries maintain in time of war." He took a quick gulp from his glass.

"Have I helped you at all?" he asked, suddenly urbane, relaxed once more. "The Irish political scene is a complex one, as I believe I started out by warning you," he continued before John had a chance to answer him. "You get a dozen different pictures from as many people. It just means you can't leap to conclusions. The only thing you can be sure of is that Ireland will not involve herself in the wars of other nations. And that's what you wanted to know." He put it as a statement of fact rather than as a question.

John felt much as the Minister had made him feel. Everything had been summed up for him in a sweeping simplification. He knew it wasn't adequate, or particularly significant. But it left him helpless to probe any further.

"Thanks very much, but I don't believe I will," John said in answer to Leary's offer to order another drink. "Your time must be more than up, and I'm supposed to be hunting new lodgings."

Leary looked at him searchingly again. "Oh, yes. That's what you looked me up for, wasn't it? The Royal Hibernian."

Neither of them was fooled, but John obligingly drew the map out of his pocket again.

Chapter Eleven

KING moved her breakfast table into the path of unexpected sunlight at the far end of her room, and set about assembling an indifferent meal. Living with her grandmother had had its points, since she was completely undomestic, and her own income didn't run to a servant. Madame Powers did herself well, and King enjoyed her physical comfort. But there were values more important to her, and she had never managed to stay at Greystones for more than a month or two.

She could never imagine how a complete meal was achieved in edible order. By the time she was finally ready to sit down, with the various dishes ranged around her, the bacon was overdone and the tea already half-cold. It was a familiar situation and provided now only a tangible addition to a general sense of frustration. It was three days since she had seen John Payne. Despite all she had done in that time he was never entirely out of her thoughts. She tried to picture him at this moment. He was probably waking up in that barren room from which all traces of personality had been removed by a succession of transient renters.

He was the only boy she had known who had never had a girl before. She had known it about him with a sense of challenge the first time she saw him. It made her feel the way she felt before a beautiful and untried colt, before a new problem for the exercise of her wits, towards any promising adventure. It didn't matter that she would tire quite soon. She knew that even at the outset. But she knew it with her mind alone, without any of the emotional conviction that could have deterred her, and that would only come at the end.

She hoped to God he was alone. He was beginning to get acquainted, and there would be plenty of girls who would want him. And now he would understand them. Darling, she thought, willing her voice to reach him the way she had used to do as a child, no matter what I do, don't ever have anyone but me! I think I'd marry you sooner than that.

When her telephone rang she leaped to answer it. "Yes!" she said, "YES?" and made no effort to conceal the eagerness she was feeling. "Oh," she said flatly after a minute, because it was only Timmy Leary to tell her that there was going to be a meeting that night. "Your grandmother put me on to you here," he told her. "You'll be coming along, I suppose?"

"Yes, of course," she said briefly and hung up. Bloody fools, she told herself furiously. But she certainly wasn't going to leave them to Madame Powers.

Bloody fools—she thought again that evening, setting out after dinner for the meeting place on the far side of

the city. She had put in a tedious afternoon at the German consulate, doing clerical jobs that bored her. And now that she particularly did not wish to leave Dublin, she had been given a mission in Galway. At almost any other time she would have welcomed it and turned it into at least a partial holiday. Well, she hadn't committed herself. She had left a loophole that with any luck she could bargain Streib into. It was nonsense, she persuaded herself, that it was any more dangerous or difficult for him. What the hell, she demanded of herself, would they do if I wasn't here?

Along the quays and over O'Connell Bridge she paused a number of times to watch the boats on the river, or the birds that rode the stream like decoys, and were the only assurance that the sluggish waters moved. It wasn't a beautiful river, the Liffey, certainly not here in town. It might have been that black stream with which Joyce had symbolized all Ireland. But there was always a magic about the life of water, quicker, more immediate than the life of earth. She thought of all the restless of the earth who had found peace only on water. As a child she had dreamed of cutting her hair and running away to sea. But later it had come to seem to her that that was a man's solution, and no answer for herself. For all the vitality and aggression that she knew to be in herself were drawn from a woman's power, and would have to make terms with the earth. She had still to make those terms, unless she was to fail altogether and be reduced to bitterness. Already it crept in, impa-

tience and scorn and the lengthening foreshadow of frustration, even here where she had chosen to cast her lot, here where if anywhere she ought to be able to make those terms.

Beyond the bridge she walked more briskly, to make up for time lost in idling, and presently turned off into a side street that was little more than an alley. It was so narrow and dark between the encroaching buildings that walled it that the air was perceptibly cooler at once. It was an unhealthy, damp chill, repellent, like the atmosphere of an underground passage never dried and sweetened by the sun of day.

For some time, King had been fastidiously conscious of the frying grease smells of fish-and-chip houses, of the bitter, stale odor from innumerable pubs. But here the air was foul in another way. It stank with nothing living, nothing edible, however unappetizing. This was the stench of refuse and decay, of excrement and offal, the rotten residue of living. And such was its foulness and intensity that nothing less than generations could have accounted for it. Only an ancient city in its most abject slums could have produced such a stench. King knew it well. She knew, too, that she could become almost accustomed to it, and only on emerging again into the fresher city she had left behind, be struck by the fragrance of pure air. Yet it never lost its first power and overwhelmed her each time she encountered it with a loathing nausea of the body, a fury and contempt of the mind.

She felt contempt, too, for the whole sordid secrecy of her mission. Every face she passed seemed furtive with her own burden. Each twist and turn of her circuitous route called forth her helpless scorn. It was like some claptrap, second-rate drama. Or like a bad dream, and as the victim of a dream she moved through it and at the same time stood off and observed it with wonder and derision. Yet, this was her heritage. This was part of the terrible beauty that was born in the Easter rebellion, that had gone underground to run like a fire and had emerged only to burn the same incendiaries again.

At last she entered the sagging Georgian doorway of an abandoned house. For a moment inside she stood still until her eyes had adjusted themselves to the dark. A precarious flight of stairs rose directly before her. Paint was peeling from the bannisters and strips of dirty paper hung from the walls and cluttered the floor. The temperature inside was exactly the temperature of the out of doors, very damp and evening cool. In all the house there was no sound that she could detect. She moved around the foot of the stairway and went down the hall some forty feet to an open door at the back.

Standing in the narrow frame, from which the door itself had been removed, she looked into the darkness beyond. She could hear the dulled noises of the street behind her, but in this place all was quiet. She was looking into a cobbled area on a level with the threshold where she stood. No light from any window shone onto

it, but after a moment she knew that it was empty, and could even see the piles of refuse that littered the cobbled floor. If she had never been there before, no path would be discernible across the area, and no conceivable destination. As it was, she moved without hesitation into the center of the court, and then made an abrupt right-hand turn along what proved to be fairly clear lines. At the far right wall a narrow wooden door was set into the brick. Raising her hand to eye level, she released a latch, pushed in the door, and quickly closed it again behind her.

She was in the cellar laundry of another house. A gas jet impended from the low plaster ceiling which was crossed by a number of pipes. Pipes ran along the stained walls, and in one corner of the room a faucet dripped into a pair of set tubs. It wasn't a large room. It was empty except for the tubs, and there was only one door besides the one she had entered. The only remarkable thing about the room was the absence of any window.

The inside door opened onto a steep flight of stairs, unlighted and terminating in another closed door. It was all like some ridiculous game at a children's party, King told herself not for the first time. Or like those childish presents done up in one box after another until the recipient's patience is exhausted.

She could hear voices now, and at the head of the stairs she went rapidly to a door from which a streak of light showed along the dark floor of the corridor.

There was one voice speaking she knew just before entering the room. Madame Powers had begun already.

The room was poorly lighted by gas jets in cloudy glass containers. It was an enormous room, one that might have seen balls in better days. The floor-length windows were shuttered from within, and now the room was nearly filled with a shabby assortment of chairs and stools occupied almost exclusively by men. King came into the back of the room and made her way, along the inside wall, to the partially empty row of seats at the very front. Madame Powers faced the gathering from behind a bare wooden table, and her voice went on uninterrupted while King found herself a seat.

"We mustn't deceive ourselves. Or let others deceive us! This situation isn't new. It's terribly, tragically familiar!" There was a low murmur of "Hear, Hear" from a number of men's voices. "The only wonder is," she went on, "that the world is letting it happen so soon again. Twenty years! Just time enough for sons to go the way of their fathers." King moved her chair so that she could rest her head against the wall beside her. She closed her eyes, though there was no way of shutting out that voice. It was impossible to be unaware of its beauty. Madame Powers's most fanatical admirers were no more sensitive to that.

"I tell you, and you know that it is truth, that so long as England dominates Europe there can be no peace. We have one enemy. Europe has one enemy. There is a single enemy to world unity and world peace!"

"Hear, Hear! True for you!"

"Now," she was going on, "that we have wrested from the enemy some small measure of our birthright, they will call upon our 'Loyalty,' forsooth, to give back that little measure, to restore to the tyrant his complete tyranny. And for what? To preserve that tyranny in every corner of the globe! It is not for Irishmen alone that we speak. It is not for the Indians alone that we speak! It is not alone for the Chinese to whose tragic plight these defenders of civilization turned deaf ears. Oh, yes! The peace of the world was no affair of theirs in nineteen-thirty-two. But world commerce is their affair. World domination is their affair. And the minute that their stranglehold is threatened, then the world must come to their rescue—to the rescue of tyranny!" There was a slight pause, and when she began again her flexible voice was gentle. "We are a little nation. Our power, as the world thinks of power, is slight. But there is a power that can be wielded by the least of these. It is the power of right. The power of resistance to evil. Out of our bloody and terrible history we have learned that which the world must learn if it is to survive. Innisfail! Island of Destiny! Shall we forget, in this tragic hour, the nature of that destiny?"

The enthusiasm of her hearers was necessarily restrained, but it was unmistakable. King let it rise and fall, and rise again, while she told herself honestly that Madame Powers had a command over words. She did not rely entirely on the magic of her remarkable voice.

The same speech delivered by someone else would have not been unimpressive. Still, King concluded, and got quickly to her feet, she had been doing it for fifty years.

The rows of faces that confronted her were first of all Irish, and on that account had a good deal in common. More than that, they were predominantly the faces of simple people, without sophistication. Yet beyond race and a similarity of circumstances, there was something that united them. They had all a marked sensitivity. It might be lost on a stranger. At this moment, King considered, they might be said to be impassive, blank of all expression. But she saw the awareness on every face. They waited, and were alert, all their faculties receptive. It might be only experience that told her this, for she knew, too, how trigger-like was their poise. In an instant every face could change—to rage, to despair, to mystic exaltation. This was their sensitivity. It was not so much, perhaps, an ability to express as an inability to conceal. Like the faces of vulnerable children who could not dissemble, they reflected every emotion. It made them terrifying and pitiful, and King was racked again with the old, inescapable, conflicting passions. It took almost a physical wrench to free her mind for the business at hand.

"Fellow Revolutionaries," King began boldly, and her voice was pitched to drown out the murmuring audience if it should fail immediately to silence them. "We talk of unity." The room was silent now, but her voice still rang in its original intensity.

"Our cry is 'Smash Partition,' yet we are not even united here amongst ourselves. It is the curse of our country. At this moment we are faced with disruption." Here Madame Powers' voice broke in, and now it held a note of anger, almost of threat.

"*You* are facing us with disruption," she said.

A man's voice interrupted. "Let her speak." A number of others took it up. In the hush that fell again, King resumed as though she had never stopped.

"Madame Powers has a nice feeling for words. So nice that she fails to use them at all. But one word got by her guard to speak her mind for her. 'Resistance!' " She looked scornfully at the faces before her. "What has resistance ever got us?" she demanded of them. "What have we ever gained without a bloody battle?" There were sounds of approval from her hearers. "Must we be cowards as well as slaves?" Here the approval became louder and more prolonged. "On one thing we agree," she went on, "and it is the essential. We know our enemy. Doesn't that argue that we know our friend as well? That we know our ally as well? I am not defending my position, as Madame Powers finds it necessary to defend hers." This taunt was followed by a pause, and her grandmother's voice moved into it.

"You protest, Goneril," she said, and her voice underlined the irony.

But King was speaking again. " 'Who is not with me is against me,' " she quoted ringingly. "We cannot equivocate. We cannot compromise! We must run with the

hares or hunt with the hounds. I think often," she said more quietly, "of the words of Lionel Johnson: 'Some way to faithful Innisfail, shall come the majesty and awe of *martial* truth that must prevail, to lay on all the eternal law.' " There was a dramatic pause before she continued.

"We have dissipated our energies too long. We have been beguiled by the illusion of independence and its fellow myth, isolation. It is necessary now that we subordinate our differences for the defeat of our common enemy. We have at last an ally with the kind of strength we need and lack. An ally who understands the power of unity, the need of unity at any cost. We can smash partition in Ireland, and in Europe as well, if we unite to smash the common divider of us all."

Enthusiasm rose like a swelling echo to her words.

"I will name names," she said, when the room was quiet again. "I am not afraid to grasp the nettle which Madame Powers has prestidigitated out of our sight. Let us loan our bases! Loan them, I say, to our ally, not barter them to the broken promises of our enemy!"

"There's no question of barter," Tim Leary spoke up. "If the government thinks differently we will sabotage any designs of England with every weapon at our command. Ireland will hold her own and stand clear."

"The girl's right." An old man stood up at the back of the room, his weather-raw country face pompous with solemnity. "It's too late to stand clear. And when has an

Irishman ever refused to let his hand do the work of his heart?"

King had resumed her seat and now she rocked back and forth and groaned. "Hearts and flowers," she said wildly. "Flags and trumpets. Almighty God, when has an Irishman ever used his head?"

A minute before, order had prevailed, and now everyone was talking at once. The room was a sounding box of confusion and conflicting argument. There was no longer anyone who remained seated. King herself jumped to her feet once more. She cleared her throat, but it was impossible to be heard any longer. It was like speaking into a gale, and as though her words had been blown back into her throat; they were only a vibration in her own ears. She tried a second time, and then she bolted from the room, knocking into an overturned chair as she went. No one was aware of her going, unless it was Madame Powers, whose golden voice had become a hoarse and futile scream.

Outside, King leaned for a moment against the wall of the building. "The poor little brainless bastard was only agreeing with me," she said, "and I talk about unity!"

Chapter Twelve

As if from a great distance, and dimly, King thought of her grandmother. Out of her own overpowering weariness she saw anew the tremendous, unflagging vitality of Madame Powers, and asked herself how it was possible. If she herself had been seventy, if she had been seventy times seventy, she thought she could not be wearier. And Madame Powers, she knew quite well, would still be in that room, would be there while there was a room, if it came to that, until the windows were smashed and the chairs broken and the doors torn away from their hinges.

"They put him in a rotten shed without a roof!" She had heard her grandmother tell that to the crowd who had surrounded her in the public street. And King had known, as Madame Powers knew, who had torn the roof from that shed where the revolutionary was trapped in his hiding. Violence and destruction were the broad wake of her passing, and still after fifty years she would roar the roof from her head to brandish in the face of her enemy, to cry "See what you've done!"

Back at O'Connell Bridge the city was still awake. It

wasn't late, she realized then. Although that was hard to believe, she had been here less than an hour before. The evening had passed into night, and she had passed into an aging exhaustion, but it had taken only an hour.

Again she stopped on the bridge, but not to look at anything now. She closed her eyes. The wind was from the sea and fresh with salt, and she let it blow against her eyelids. For a minute or two it took her mind away. She was in the west, among the solitary mountains and the ragged inlets of the sea. She leaned against the breastwork of the bridge and saw the cliffs of Connemara washed with spray. The whole Atlantic lay before her, and behind, the reaches of a lonely, wild and cleansing land. For the wounds of humanity she borrowed from the healing inhumanity of space, and when she was ready to move on she had begun to feel restored.

Perhaps, after all, she ought to go on the job that she, being Irish, could do so much better than any stranger. It would mean weeks, waiting for shipments, supervising their disposition, selecting sites for bases and preparing routes for supplies. She knew the coast from Westport to the Cliffs of Mohr and Aran. She knew the islanders, and they accepted her. They'd never let Streib into a curragh! She remembered her own first visit when she had been taken for an outlander. The dark faces of the men, standing reluctantly by their boat, unwilling to risk the anger of the sea against an alien. She had guessed what was in their minds, and out

of a knowledge taken from her grandmother, she had spoken a Gaelic blessing. How it had changed their faces! And then the oldest of the men had stepped forward to help her into the curragh. "Sure," he had said while they all laughed their relief, "you couldn't drown if we threw you into the sea!"

In front of a coffee shop in Grafton Street, King suddenly decided to go in. As she turned into the recessed entrance, she came face to face with John Payne, who had turned simultaneously from the opposite direction. They both stopped, and neither of them smiled.

"I—I was just going in, too," King said finally. "I suppose we may as well go together?" His only answer was to hold the door for her, but she knew that he would follow her to a table. They sat in a mutual, constrained silence until he said, stiffly,

"I got your flowers."

"Oh. I guess it was silly of me, wasn't it? I suppose Americans never do things like that."

"Why did you walk out on me that night?" His eyes were as direct as his words.

There it was. If they were going to talk at all, it would have to come out, of course. "I don't know," she lied.

It seemed to her that he was thinner, and it wasn't unbecoming. He had an angular face, the bones prominent around his eyes, which were large and exceptionally grave. It was an arresting face, never far from gaunt, and no less attractive for being decidedly so.

Unexpectedly his lips were full and almost too sensuously well formed. They might have been noticeable on their own account, but were conspicuous in contrast to his lean, ascetic face and somber eyes.

"I think you usually know very well why you do things," he said.

She had never seen him so grave, so self-possessed.

"Yes, I suppose I do," she admitted. "At least I manage to give that impression. I'll have coffee and a pastry."

He gave their orders to the waitress who had come to stand over him.

"Perhaps I don't want to know," King said. "Don't you ever deceive yourself? Quite deliberately, I mean."

"I think you are probably much more successful at deceiving others." His mouth tightened around the words as if, she thought, he were biting on actual pain, or tasting bitterness. Well, she had never imagined she hadn't hurt him. She probably knew exactly how much, because she knew him. She had known him at once. He was very easy to know, like a gentle dog, only a little more circumspect than a puppy.

"Perhaps I was trying to protect myself," she said. Then she saw the embarrassment he felt for what, on the face of it, seemed a preposterous untruth. He was humiliated that she should expect him to believe it. "I know," she told him quickly, "it sounds crazy, even to me."

The waitress returned just then, and it was necessary to give their attention to selecting pastry.

"You remember," King said, directly she had left them again, "you said that you were afraid you were going to fall in love with me?"

"That was a long time ago." He answered her slowly. "Before I had." His look reproached her with more than his words. It made her remember what had ensued, what it had meant to him, and what it ought to have meant to her. It was one thing to be cautious beforehand. If she had meant to withdraw, she should have done it then, while he was still free, as well. She was seeing it all as he saw it, and as she hadn't seen it before.

"You're not like anyone I've ever known before," she said, but she knew while she said it that she was helpless to defend herself. It was a need she had never felt before. And this was all she could say. She couldn't tell him how innocent he was, and that he had required what she had not known how to give him. It was absurd, in a way, but she supposed it was chivalry.

"I don't think you ever need to be afraid of love," he said.

"At least you've got to believe that I never was afraid of it before." She leaned forward in her eagerness, and then very soon she sat back in despair again. It was true, what she had told him, and it meant a great deal coming from her. But it wasn't enough. For him, in relation to what he wanted of her, in terms of what he

gave her, it wasn't nearly enough. She could see it quite well, but there again, she couldn't explain that to him without hurting him further.

"I used to love my grandmother," she said. It was something she had never spoken of to anyone else, but she wanted to tell him, even if he couldn't know how to value her intention. "At least I suppose it was love. She dominated my life completely: I thought the sun rose when she decided to get up in the morning. She intended I should. She has a passion for power! My mother could never get on with her, and then she ran away and married very young. It's queer how fooled you can be, isn't it?" For the moment she had forgotten him, because it was impossible to speak of these things without a passionate, blinding remembrance. Her voice was tense with it. Her eyes looked through him.

"I used to think she didn't care about me at all—my grandmother, I mean. I thought she was jolly glad to have me away at school. I thought she was much too important and occupied even to know I was alive. I used to do the most incredible things to try and please her." She finished her coffee in a quick swallow. "Finally I just did things to attract her attention. I didn't care whether she liked them or not, so long as she noticed me. God, she was clever!"

"But why should she have wanted to dominate you?" he asked.

"I tell you she has a passion for power! Her bloody cause is just that. And she meant to make me a part of

it. You see, the one thing she can't control is death. And she can't stand the idea of losing her grip altogether. I was her great hope—she meant to make me a second self— Oh, I can't talk about it," she broke off.

After a minute he said quietly, "It sounds fairly natural to me. Sooner or later I think we all get a reaction against the forces that have molded us. For a while we hate them. But it isn't their fault. It isn't intentional on their part, it's just inevitable. You'll see that some time, I think."

"You don't know what you're talking about," she assured him. "No one could have accomplished what she did without intention. Ignoring me, wounding me at every turn, and then on the other hand, flaunting her power in my face until I thought I might as well be dead if I couldn't do something as powerful—something that would make her admire me, since all she admired was power. She even took my beaux away! You needn't smile." For the first time since they had met, his eyes had lightened briefly.

"It wasn't funny!" she said bitterly. "It isn't even funny today, when God knows it ought to be ridiculous. But you don't know her! Oh, at first I used to think it was inevitable. Her charm, her brilliance, her beauty—no one could help being fascinated, as I was myself. But she did it on purpose. She does it on purpose. I've learned that."

"Thank you for telling me," he said quietly, when she seemed to have finished. And then, in answer to the

surprise he saw in her face, "I'm not a clod, you know," he said.

"I'm sorry. I'm terribly sorry!" She felt ashamed and stupid and altogether unlike herself. "I think I'm awfully tired," she said.

"If you've finished I'll take you home."

"Oh, no! You're being awfully polite, but it isn't necessary."

"Come along." He got to his feet and went to pay the check.

She watched him at the cashier's window, standing firmly, his feet no longer shy, in a new quietness that she had been aware of ever since they met. She went up and stood near him, wanting to touch him, wanting to lean against him in a sudden weariness that was not physical alone.

"Come along," he said again, and held the door for her. "Shall I get a cab?" he asked her outside.

She shook her head. "I'd rather walk."

"You know," he began reflectively, "it's sometimes a disadvantage to be brilliant. I've seen it work that way. I suppose you just know that you're always ahead of other people, and you can't know just how far. So you lose track altogether, and then you get to thinking that everyone else is a lot stupider than they really are." He turned to look at her. "It's a dangerous assumption. In the end they might get the better of you, after all. You might come out behind from being too far ahead."

It was true that she had underestimated him. Not his

mind so much perhaps, but that didn't matter. Yes, it does! she told herself quickly, denying the heresy. She had always believed in mind, relied on it, clung to it. It was for her a kind of exalted currency, and her particular medium of exchange. But it's only one thing, she told herself slowly now, trying to think it out, trying to readjust to this novel idea. It's not even, she thought further, the only way that one perceives. It's not at all the only way to understand.

At that moment they came to the edge of the sidewalk at a crossing and stopped. She turned to face him.

"You have something better than brilliance," she said, and was so undeniably in earnest that it escaped condescension. "I'm just seeing it," she said, and there was a growing urgency in her voice. But more than this discovery, she was overwhelmed by something she had still only partially realized. For the first time in her adult life she was uncritically, and even to her own loss, admiring someone else. "I don't know what it is," she rushed on. "You don't make my kind of sense, and I guess"—she sounded breathless—"I've always thought there was only one kind of sense."

"And you had a corner on that market." He barely touched her elbow as they crossed the street.

She considered it in silence. She supposed it was that. She supposed she was somewhat in the position of a duelist who had excelled all his life with pistols and had suddenly found an adversary who called for swords. He would be not only liable, for the first time, to de-

feat, but the whole skill of his life would be discredited, without value in this situation.

"I could beat you at any game," she said, as if taking a new hold on her waning powers. "I've never met anyone I couldn't! But you don't play games," she finished.

"They seem kind of childish." He seemed to apologize. But it was she who felt in the wrong. At least she felt called upon to defend her position.

"It depends on the game," she said. "Or perhaps I should say that it depends on the purpose—the reason behind the game. Tonight—" she began, and then she stopped. Even now, even to him, she was not ready to talk about that. Perhaps she never would be. Perhaps she could never reveal, because she was not wholly willing to admit to herself, that the fate of her country hung on a game being played in sordid back alleys by violent and childish men.

It was his simplicity, his limitation and his strength that he had never had to fight for anything. It was apparent to look at him that he had never plotted and contrived, never deceived, nor even concealed. And if, as a result, he was untempered, he was also unstained. This was the knowledge of him, and she had it all now. She revolved it and considered it from all angles of her own devious mind, and found it good, without condescension or ridicule.

They had arrived at her digs and after a momentary hesitation she asked him in.

"You're tired," he said. But she protested.

"I've had coffee. I'll be up for hours."

He took her arm and turned her to face him.

"What do you want of me?" he asked her.

She looked back at him quite as seriously. "Nothing I've ever had from anyone else," she told him, "or wanted, or even known about."

He considered what she had said while his hand on her arm tightened, and his eyes searched hers. "I don't know," he said uncertainly, and then she saw his look shift to her mouth. "I think right now," he said, "we both want something else." He dropped her arm.

"I don't trust us," he said. "We'll only be confused again. It won't prove anything. I'll call you tomorrow," he finished quickly and turned and walked away before her outstretched hand had touched him.

She let herself into her flat and then sat in an armchair without turning on the lights. He had been stronger than herself, she thought. Or possibly he had more at stake. Or it might be, she thought out of a sudden angry confusion and weariness, that he's just a god-damned stinking prig!

Chapter Thirteen

KING seldom tired and when she did she recovered fast. Then it became a matter of astonishment or disbelief that she had ever felt otherwise than vigorous and fresh. I must have been bloody tired! was her first awed conviction on wakening the following morning. The realization was inescapable since she began at once to remember all she had said the night before. Nothing could account for it except an unaccustomed exhaustion. She had said—or had she only thought? She tried to sort it all, the feelings in one place, the actual words in another. Her mind recaptured associating scenes. She had sat in the restaurant and thought one thing; she had stood at the corner of a street and said another.

John had said, "I don't think you ever need be afraid of love," emphasizing the word. She knew very well what he had meant. It was quite true that she knew a great deal more about desire. It had always seemed to her that there was really nothing else. Only when desire was thwarted for some reason, or combination of reasons, it became an obsession and people called it

love. It had even appeared to her at times that society was nothing more than an elaborate conspiracy against desire, and she was not at all persuaded that the result was the only possible form of order, and chaos the only alternative.

She still lay in bed, very quiet except for her mind, and had just begun to wonder when John would telephone, when her doorbell sounded.

"I thought perhaps you'd have breakfast with me," John told her from the doorstep. "I didn't mean to get you up, but I've got to talk to you." He came into the room when she asked him to, and standing with his back against the door, he went on looking at her, at the clearness of her eyes after sleep, the exceptional freshness of her skin before she had touched it with powder. "I had a rotten night," he said.

"I was wondering when you would call," she said, "and now you've come!"

"Didn't you know I would? Don't you always win?"

"I didn't win last night. Besides, I thought you never played games." She turned away and he watched her cross the room to the open bed. She moved as simply as she stood, neither awkwardly nor with anything that could be described as grace. It wasn't womanly. He wasn't sure it was feminine at all. It suggested the nerveless competence of a young boy. Her back was boyish, too, very flat, even while she leaned across the bed, drawing up the covers, very broad at the shoulders and slanting sharply to the waist. Only when she faced

him, as she was doing now, the illusion was lost in the lifting line of her breast, the soft curve of her throat. "I'll give you breakfast," she told him.

"I wish you'd brought some flowers," she said when they were finally seated at the table. "I can stand any amount of squalor, but I *require* flowers. I've just thrown the last ones out. They'd begun to stink."

" 'Flowers that fester,' " he began automatically, but it wasn't anything he wanted to say, and he stopped.

"Quite!" she finished crisply for him. "I loath quotations. After all, we can all read."

"We can't all remember what we read," he said, knowing it was pompous, but feeling nettled.

"I should hope not," she retorted. "Human intercourse is quite moribund enough without that coup de grâce." It was an amusing twist of his meaning, but he wasn't ready to be amused.

"I said," he repeated dully, "that we can't *all* remember what we read. I didn't say we can't remember *all* we read."

Her eyes twinkled then. "We sound for all the world like the Mad Hatter's tea party. Let's take a new grip. Can you stomach any bacon at this unholy hour?"

He didn't point out that it was actually ten o'clock. He refrained, too, from observing that she had a violent way with words and had managed to convey a quite revolting picture of his stomach in grips with bacon that threatened to ruin even his enjoyment of tea.

"I asked you to marry me," he said instead. "I've

been thinking about the fact that you never answered me. I suppose that's answer enough."

"Are you asking me again?"

"No. I don't think we agree about much of anything. We'd probably quarrel the whole time."

"It might be fun." She grinned at him. "I used to think it would be awfully exciting to be married to someone who beat me."

"But you were horrified when I threatened to spank you."

"You're so undiscriminating! It's not the same thing at all."

He considered it. "I suppose no one has ever humiliated you," he said finally.

"Don't let that put ideas in your head," she warned quickly. "It may be exactly what I need, but God help anyone who tries it! By the way, what did you want to talk to me about?"

He moved his chair back a trifle and reached into his pocket for a cigarette. He had left her in one mood last night. This morning she was entirely different, and what he had intended to say no longer seemed possible.

"I suppose I ought to just quit," he said slowly, "but I guess I'd rather string along."

She laughed. "You didn't imagine I'd let you quit, did you?"

He looked back at her very seriously. "If I made up my mind that way, yes. You wouldn't have anything to say about it. But I've decided to play."

"Oh. Meaning what?"

"Games," he said with almost a grin. "We'll play your way. Then nobody will get hurt."

She studied him thoughtfully. "I'm not sure I like that," she said.

"It's your idea," he reminded her. "And I'm beginning to think it will be fun."

"How silly!" Her voice was full of scorn all at once. "You sound for all the world like a ridiculous parent saying—'Very well, my dear, if you want to drink whiskey, I'll drink it with you. Won't it be *fun*?' I suppose you think you're shaming me, or something idiotic!"

He got up and smiled down at her. "I see your point," he said, "but it isn't what I meant at all. You see, I've always been too damned serious. I'm just beginning to see it."

"Isn't that just dandy? Everyone is seeing everything all of a sudden. An illumination party!" She got up too. "Well, I'm seeing my way out, thank you. You're more preposterously infantile and stupid than I dreamed, and that's going some."

She started to move past him, but he reached out and caught her shoulder. "You're not going to lose your sense of proportion just as I've started to get one, I hope?" He shook her gently. "Really—"

She jerked away from him. "Stop making such a bloody fool of yourself!" she fairly shouted.

"I think what you're afraid of is that I'm making a fool of you," he said quietly.

"God almighty!" Her voice was strident with exasperation. "I could tell you who the fool is! Why do you suppose I ever spoke to you in the first place?" She stopped abruptly.

"Well? Why did you?" He waited, but when she was obviously going to say no more, he said, "Whatever it was, it shouldn't surprise me. It doesn't matter any longer, in any case."

In that at least he might have been echoing her thoughts. For certainly it no longer mattered.

"John," she began, newly earnest, but he interrupted her.

"Look," he begged her, "let's not say anything else. Last night you were tired. Maybe you meant what you said at the time, but after all there's just one thing we both mean, at any time. Isn't there?" He moved against her. "We want each other like hell." His arms held her when she tried to withdraw, and when she turned her face away, he began to kiss her throat.

"You're being perfectly revolting," she told him icily.

He only went on insinuating his body against hers and now he was speaking against her ear, along her throat, not endearment but the precise, urgent language of lust.

"God damn you," she said furiously, and then, in an angry unyielding violence she took his thigh between hers and at the same instant her mouth closed over his.

There was no softening of her body, nothing of surrender in her whole embrace. It was strangely both savage and calculating, and told him more clearly than speech that she refused him only submission. She was fighting him as certainly as though she clawed and bit. and he was at the same time enraged and further incited. It was as though they enacted some perverse death-mating in which each strove for his own satisfaction and the other's destruction, and neither could have said which goal was to be the more desired.

Their strengths were so nearly matched that first one and then the other was swayed to a moment's unbalance, but their locked embrace never loosened, and they moved as one body. Now John saw that imperceptibly they had approached the wall, and with a powerful heave of his body, bearing her opposing weight before him, he moved her back to the wall. He felt the second's hesitation with which she registered her surprise. In that fleeting suspense her head went back, and for the first time since they had entered this embrace, their eyes met. Hers were startled, alert as a wary animal, and then abruptly they closed. He watched her lids drop, and simultaneously felt the reistance go out of her in a long shudder. From shoulder to knee her body softened into his.

For a long time King lay beside John on the bed without speaking, but giving him in a hundred ways the eloquence of her body. In every experience of her life she had known division. Her passions had always

a conflict within them. In any satisfaction she had always a residue of discontent. Her greatest passions had not involved her body, and her mind had always split within itself, one part to stand aside, to analyze and revolt. If she had willed herself to disunity she would not have achieved it more perfectly. And she had accepted it. She had come to regard it as a sort of doom, herself as the warring prototype of her race. This latest encounter might have been the symbol of her whole experience, for she had entered it in strife, desiring and reviling her desire, despising the object for which she lusted. Then, as if fate had decided to match her perversity, she had emerged whole, in a completeness that was unique to her and that was beyond any destructive power of her mind, in which her mind was not involved, except that it gave consent.

It was possibly an hour later that John spoke, his voice hoarse and blurred as though from sleep.

"Now you belong to me," he said.

"I love you," she told him, and the words were as full of wonder and passion as though they were wholly new. "Where shall we go?" she asked him a little later. "Where we can just be together? Where we won't have to be with anyone else at all?"

"Honeymoon," he said dreamily, and then suddenly he raised up on one elbow. "Will you marry me, Madam?" he asked quaintly, but very happily, in complete confidence now.

She moved her head against his arm, her eyes closed.

"Does that matter so much to you?" she asked him. And then, "Darling, darling," she said when she felt him stiffen, "I only want to be with you! How can you think about anything else?"

"I'm not," he said, and his voice was all awake now. "That's what I'm thinking about—being with you, all the time. And everywhere! Not just in bed. But living with you, playing with you, working with you—"

"I know!" she told him ardently. "I want you like that, too. All the time, everywhere, like my own body. Like my own blood, inside me! That's where you are. It's done. It is! It can't ever be any other way again. Don't look like that," she begged him, and reached up to rub the frown from his forehead. "Anything, darling. Anything! Whatever you want, I want it, too." His mouth came down to hers then.

"I know!" she said presently. "Let's go to the west coast! It'll be heavenly there now, and you've no idea how heavenly it can be! I know the most perfect place—a gatekeeper's lodge on a big place that belongs to some friends of my family. They've loaned it to me before. It's buried in rhododendrons and looks straight out to sea, without a house in sight anywhere—nothing but mountains and moors and the sea. Oh, God, you'll love it! I don't think the family will even be there now. We can have it all to ourselves. Do you fish? We can fish for salmon. I'll take you to the most marvelous place! You can't hear yourself think for the roar of the water." She closed her eyes.

"I can see it now—the water boiling white and the salmon leaping and flashing in the sun! And then the lakes, darling! A whole series of them. You come on them suddenly, everywhere. So deep and clear that you can see the mountains standing on their heads. And then a wind comes up and your innocent little mirror turns into an angry sea. Maybe you think you can row, but wait till you've been caught on a Galway lake in a wind!" Her eyes glowed. "God, it's a battle! And then," she went on, "we can walk, and climb." She turned her face to his again. "Have you ever walked on heather? It's like a sponge. And sometimes it's like a very wet sponge! The hills there are full of water. After a soaking rain they stream with waterfalls—like the rock that was struck by Moses and gushed water. You see, there's water everywhere, there! Oh, darling!" She kissed him in sheer exuberance now. "You might bring some books," she said, "and read to me in the evenings. We'll have a turf fire. There's nothing in the world like the smell of peat! And the blue smoke it makes—really blue! You'll notice it at once from all the cottage chimneys, straight as a pencil, on a clear day, and bluer than the smoke from a cigarette. And then I'll cook for you, darling! There won't be anyone to do for us. I'll even clean your boots!"

"I will clean the boots," he said firmly, interrupting her for the first time.

"Oh, God!" she said suddenly, "did you ever hear anyone talk so much? That's Irish, if you like." Her

face clouded with one of her abrupt changes of mood. "That's all they ever do," she said darkly. "Talk, talk, talk. They use themselves up in talk, and there's no energy left for action. Hamlet should have been an Irishman. All this pother about understanding him! We understand him—all too well!"

King," he said gently, "I want to take you home with me. You can be so happy when you manage to forget that you're Irish."

"Oh, Christ!" she said explosively when the telephone rang. "There you are!" she pointed out dramatically, while the ringing continued, "we've got to get away from that!"

"Aren't you going to answer it?" he wanted to know.

"I know perfectly well who it is," she told him. "Otto Streib being officious about this afternoon. I've said I'd take him to meet the warden, at Hall. Wouldn't you know it?" she demanded. "Of all days! Damned if I'll answer. He'll be around here soon enough."

"If you'd answer you might put him off."

"Too late for that now," she said gloomily while a prolonged silence assured them that the telephone was through. "What time do you suppose it is?"

"God knows. What time's your date? Are you going to keep it?"

"I suppose I'll have to, darling. Besides"—she brightened unexpectedly—"I might get our expenses paid."

"What do you mean? What expenses?"

"To the West, of course. I *think*," she said, stressing

the word cautiously, "that the consulate may have an errand I can do over there?"

"The German consulate, I suppose?" There was a slight edge to his voice. "I'm quite capable of footing the bills."

"Darling! The rich American. This is where I came in—remember?"

"Brat!" He grinned at her briefly, and then he scowled again. "I can't see," he complained, "why you let yourself get mixed up with them—just because you happened to go to school there. What do they mean to you? You don't owe them anything, do you?"

"Of course not, silly! That's not the point at all."

"Well"—he sat up and swung his feet to the floor—"if you're going away with me, you're going with me. That's final!"

"Giving orders already, lamb?" She sat up as well, and then slid off the bed to her feet. "I suppose I've got to get dressed," she said, "damn it to hell!" She leaned down to kiss him lingeringly once more. "Take me to dinner tonight? I'll show you the only place in Dublin that knows the meaning of food."

"What time shall I come for you?"

"No need. I'll meet you anywhere you say."

"I'll pick you up here," he said firmly. "About six. And you'd better be on time or I'll drag the city with nets!"

"Oh, John, John!" She dropped to her knees suddenly and embraced him again. "It's such hell to leave you!"

She knelt between his knees and burrowed her body into his. "It stays!" she said intensely. "It doesn't leave!" She wanted him to know the wonder of it, and at the same time it was impossible to tell him because it rested upon a comparison that she couldn't admit to him. It rested upon all her knowledge of satisfaction, the quick appeasing of quick hunger that had never before left her hungry still. "I'll never have enough of you," she said. "Does that tell you at all?"

Chapter Fourteen

WHENEVER King spoke of Ireland and the Irish it made her melancholy. No matter how high her spirits the moment before, this subject plunged her into a somber brooding, or a kind of apathy that was a strange contrast to her usual enthusiasm. John had noticed it invariably, and it troubled him. He knew her devotion to her country, and it presented a complexity that baffled him. Although to be honest with himself, her attitude towards the Germans troubled him even more. With them, on the contrary, she seemed to enjoy a relationship that was entirely invigorating. She spoke of them with poise, to be sure, but always with admiration, never defensively, and she clearly found them stimulating. He had no idea what her involvement amounted to, but to judge by his knowledge of her it wouldn't be half-hearted.

He wondered what she had meant by an errand in Galway. He even asked himself whether she had known a great deal more about it than she had admitted to him. And then, inevitably, the suspicion crossed his mind that this whole projected trip had been premedi-

tated and not the spontaneous holiday that she had offered to him. It was a disquieting possibility and he tried to dismiss it at once. Yet he found himself returning to it again and again as he wandered through the National Gallery to beguile the afternoon.

He stood for a long time before an early portrait of Yeats, recalling the clarity of his lines, wondering at the blurred quality of his face—the glazed eyes, the loose mouth—and relating it all obscurely to the problem in his own mind. But the blurred image is superficial, he told the portrait, the inner clarity is always there, the masculine integrity. There was much about Kingsley Blake that was masculine; her force, her emotional directness, and even certain qualities of her mind. But only a woman, he thought, could realize the peculiar perversity that he sensed in her, in her relation to her countrymen, to her grandmother, Madame Powers, and even to himself. She was quite capable, he believed, of loving and deceiving at once. He didn't know that it was true, but he knew it was possible.

He tried to concentrate on a Rembrandt, but his mind slid off quickly again. He wondered where King was at this moment, whether she was where she had said she would be.

She was. With Streib and Fräulein Hirsch, King was at that moment presenting herself at the Hall.

"Miss Donlan is expecting us," she told the maid who regarded them dourly from the cautiously half-opened

door. "Tell her Miss Blake. Kingsley Blake," she said when the woman had reluctantly admitted them.

"Cordial little nest," she observed to the others, as they were left where they stood in the vast, high-ceilinged front hall, furnished only with an umbrella stand and a straight, unupholstered oak settle. "If only," she complained, "institutions didn't have to look so institutional." The German girl showed her teeth in an amiable grin. She had a poor command of English and a beautiful set of teeth. Together, King had concluded earlier, they seemed to have produced an almost offensively cheerful disposition. If it weren't for this she might have been beautiful. She was certainly extremely pretty. But any interest in her face was sacrificed to a monotonous placidity. She looked too conspicuously well-nourished to look much of anything else. She was the studied German ideal, and almost a counterpart of an unconscious American type. King had met certain friends of Helen with exactly that physical magnificence constituting an end in itself. It was like a perversion of the Greek ideal, and the antithesis of the studious French.

The maid was on the stairs again, and this time she was looking, if anything, less pleasant than she had looked on receiving them.

"She says you're to go into the library," she told them with obvious reluctance. "She'll be with you directly herself." She waited for King to move, and then followed her with her eyes.

The room, lined with books, opened off the hall and was the only room visible. Even so the woman ought to have directed them, and concealed her hostility. She was either averse to all strangers, or had conceived a dislike to these in particular.

On entering the room it became apparent that it had only begun to be a library. Beyond the shelves which lined one wall, the room became a chaotic Victorian sitting room. There looked at first to be scarcely space to move between the pieces of furniture, all plumply over-upholstered and wearing crocheted collars and cuffs. Every available bit of wall space was hung with framed prints, with amateur water colors and family photographs—their frames as miscellaneous as the faces that looked out of them. King had been here once or twice before, but at long intervals and not recently, and she was appalled anew. She realized at once, however, that it was affecting the Germans somewhat differently.

"This is very interesting," Streib was saying with pedantic gravity. "A whole life is here! She must have discarded nothing."

The girl had given an exclamation of delight on entering, and stood now with her hands clasped in an attitude of beatific admiration. "Just like my grandmother," she said. "So, exactly, is her room."

When Streib started to sit down in an armchair he was very nearly bitten by a large black dog curled up asleep on the cushion. "Mind the dog then!" the maid said sharply from where she still stood in the doorway.

"Here, Pat, poor fellow," she crooned in an altered voice.

"He's rather dangerous, isn't he?" King asked admonishly. A loud sniff was her only answer, and the woman addressed herself once more to the dog.

"Here, boy, out of this with you, or there's no tellin' what'll befall you!" The dog was evidently aged. He moved slowly and stiffly across the room, wagged his tail faintly at his mistress, and then followed her down the hall and out of hearing.

The house was silent for a moment, and then a door slammed upstairs. Immediately quick, almost running footsteps came down the stairs and Miss Donlan bustled into the room.

She was a tiny woman with gray hair cropped tight to her head like a small fur cap. Unexpectedly, her outmoded dress was elaborately feminine, an elusive concoction of chiffon and lace that swirled and settled like smoke as she moved or came to rest.

Her small bright eyes examined and dismissed both King and Otto Streib and without greeting them she advanced upon the German girl in a fluttering rush. "Hebe!" she almost sang. "How Greek you are, my child!" Then, having embraced her with exuberance, she stood off to admire her afresh. "Lovely! Lovely! You mustn't mind me," she chattered on, "beauty is for the enjoyment of all. You can't conceal it, so you may as well share it gracefully. And you do, my dear. How well you stand! Turn your head—no, just a trifle," she

directed as the girl, only a little self-consciously obliged her. "Yes! That straight forehead and curved chin! You might have come off a coin, my dear."

Suddenly she surveyed the others, as though seeing them for the first time. "What are you doing here?" she demanded crossly. "Who let you in? Can't you see I have a guest? A guest from Olympus," she added, speaking to the girl again.

"Who are you?" she asked, looking back to King. "You look familiar. Don't tell me, don't tell me. I've got it. May Powers. You're her daughter. But don't tell me your name! I have no use for names. They never suit. Now take my cat."

They followed her gaze to the mantelpiece and were surprised to realize that the motionless Siamese figure was a living animal. "What name could there possibly be that would express him? A cat is a complete enigma, nervous as quicksilver and at the same time having the repose of eternity." She went up to him as she talked. "Cat," she said, "you are unique. No animal has your power. No man knows your history. You accept us as long as we obey your laws, but you have never trusted us." Without touching him, she turned back to the room once more.

"Sit down, sit down, sit down!" she addressed them irritably. "What on earth are you all standing around like that for? Surely there are chairs enough?" Promptly she sat down herself and crossed her arms over her bosom. "Now tell me what you have come for," she

commanded. "If May Powers is in prison again, I don't want to hear about it. She's old enough to stay at home."

As if recollecting herself, she looked searchingly at King. "You must be her granddaughter," she decided. "Whatever became of your mother? Ran away, as I remember. Don't tell me about it! What are you doing here?" she asked Streib now. "Are you this girl's husband?" She indicated Fräulein Hirsch, but before anyone could answer, she was rushing on. "You're a good picker," she told him. "But I can't say the same for her. You're as ugly as she is pretty. Are you successful? I daresay that's all that matters in a man. Well, speak up! Speak up! What do you want?"

"You asked us for tea," King told her with complete composure.

"Did I? How forgetful! How remiss!" Her face was full of genuine contrition. "You must forgive me," she begged them. "I've so many things on my mind—the students, the maids—you can't think what it is to run a house like this. And then the university is always after me for accounts! I cannot keep accounts!" she said angrily. "And I can't for the life of me see what use they are. When money's spent what's the good of going over it all? I feed the household and pay the servants. If they didn't trust me, they needn't have appointed me in the first place. I can't think of anything so morbid as spending your life life pursuing pennies! I never know where my own money goes. I use my income for the

purpose it's intended—to take care of my needs, and *I* don't sit around wringing my hands and asking myself whether the butcher or the dressmaker has got one of my shillings now. 'Just for a handful of silver he left us,'" she quoted with impassioned emphasis.

"Ah, yes!" she said then, "money is a mean thing when it comes to poetry, or politics, but a great university can come badgering me for accounts!" She broke off to beam expansively upon the German girl. "Don't you agree with me, child?" she asked her lovingly. "And now we must have tea."

She bounded to her feet and went to the doorway. "Finaghy," she called and waited. King looked at Otto Streib and her eyes said unmistakably, "I warned you." Somewhere at the back of the house a door opened.

"What is it, Miss?" the dour woman's voice answered her.

"We'll be having tea," Miss Donlan called, "and not just bread and butter."

Streib had risen when she did and now waited for her to seat herself again.

"There, there"—she patted his elbow in passing—"I know you've good manners, now you can stop acting like a jack-in-the-box. You know, my dear"—she addressed the German girl again—"we've a lot in common. The great literature of your people, the ancient, classical Greek is translated into the Gaelic with more precision than into any other modern language."

"Fräulein Hirsch," King began, but Miss Donlan's voice cut into hers.

"You are a German, my dear? Ah, but the Germans have had their poets, too. And they've been great students of the Celtic, as well!"

Otto Streib sat slightly forward on his chair. "I've heard so much about your liberality, Miss Donlan," he said, "your interest in all causes, and especially your work with children! We Germans are great lovers of children."

"Ah! The kindergarten!" She nodded vigorously. "Have you any children?" she asked Fräulein Hirsch.

"A great many." The girl laughed. "All the German children in Dublin."

"And are they happy here?"

"So happy! I like for you to see them." She made it very personal, and King was conscious of a slight relaxing in Streib's posture.

"What a lovely idea! We must make an engagement at once." Miss Donlan got up and went to a desk that was strewn with papers in complete disorder. After scrambling them about still further, she gave it up. "Never mind," she said cheerfully, "I can never find my engagement calendar. And if I found it now I should only lose it again later."

At this moment the maid returned, carrying an enormous tray and again followed by the black dog. "Come here, Pat, and get acquainted." Miss Donlan snapped her fingers at the dog.

The woman set the tea tray down rather forcefully. "Sure they've met already," she said glumly.

Miss Donlan looked up quickly. "He didn't bite anyone, I hope? He's a lamb, really, but he's old and his nerves are bad. Though," she added fairly, "it's just as painful to be bitten by nerves as by temper."

"Don't be apologizin' for *him*," the maid said with a dark emphasis on the pronoun.

"I nearly sat on him," Streib explained.

Miss Donlan laughed delightedly. "He loves the furniture," she said, "like any old man." This remark seemed to produce a mollifying effect on Finaghy. She looked almost pleasant.

"Come on, then, Pat," she said, and once more they passed out of the room.

"Poor old Finaghy," her mistress said then, "she's been with me for twenty years and it's not always been easy. The dog was given me by a man from her county, in the West, and she adopted him on the spot. He's not mine at all any longer. I've tried a number of times to introduce a new pup to the house, but Pat will have none of it. Between them they run the place," she finished philosophically.

"Hmm," she observed, lifting various covers on the tray, "Finaghy's outdone herself. She must have taken a terrible dislike to you!" She seemed to expect them to find it as amusing as she did herself and laughed disarmingly into their faces. "It's a great thing," she added cheerfully; "I can always count on her to do right, and

when anything goes wrong she does better. I couldn't get along without her. How do you like your tea? I see she's brought lemon, even, took you for an American, no doubt." All the last remarks were addressed to Fräulein Hirsch.

"How do the Irish like it?" she asked with an ingratiating smile.

"How sweet you are! Milk and sugar."

"Then I like that, if I can?"

"Isn't this a strange way of showing her dislike?" Streib inquired while they all watched Miss Donlan pour the tea.

"You don't know the Irish very well," she told him.

He revolved the problem further and finally brought out: "She means to suggest, perhaps, that we have had no lunch?"

"Certainly not!" their hostess snapped. "What a perfectly stupid supposition! You can't analyze the Irish," she finished tartly.

"Did you never hear of 'face'?" King asked him with quiet perversity. "The honor of the house? She's thinking of herself, not us. If you think well enough of someone you can treat him as shabbily as you like. But with an enemy, if you're Irish at least, you maintain a terrible courtesy, you treat him with fantastic respect. And he is supposed to know that you've insulted him in the only manner available to one of your superior breeding."

Miss Donlan simply looked at Kingsley Blake. For

once she had nothing to say. King knew quite well what she meant by her silence and her look and was satisfied that she had been rude to her hostess and committed a small treason against her countrymen. It was exactly what she intended, and now they understood one another quite well. As soon as she had had her tea, it would be possible for her to leave. Nothing else would be expected of her than the manners of the tinkers who traditionally eat and run.

She accepted her tea and amused herself by watching Fräulein Hirsch ingratiate herself still further. She even wondered if the girl hadn't, after all, a shrewd knowledge of the endearing possibilities of her limited vocabulary. There was a man at the consulate who had been in Dublin for more than ten years and was still stumbling about in English with a lovable helplessness. No one was really fooled, but it remained an affecting pose. Women loved to come to his rescue, and his blunders were invariably funny. If this girl was unconscious of her effects, she wouldn't be so for long.

"Forgive me for laughing, my dear," Miss Donlan was saying now, "but it's only because it's so sweet! I suppose I ought to explain," she went on, "that these little beasts that pull the carts are donkeys. A monkey is a tiny animal that climbs trees."

When she had finished her tea and helped herself to one of her own cigarettes, King got unconcernedly to her feet. "Thanks so much," she said briefly. "I don't want to disturb the others, but I'll have to push off."

When Miss Donlan's eyes turned from their charmed contemplation of the German girl to Kingsley Blake some of her original irritability crept into them. But she said only, "Yes, of course. Tell May to come and see me if she's at liberty and not jailed again. Good-bye."

"I hadn't expected you to leave quite so soon," Streib told her while the two other women continued their conversation. "I must see you alone, so I suppose I shall have to leave, too."

"Must you? Is there any hurry? Not but what they're getting on famously without you."

He glanced at them as well. "I am so very sorry"—he bowed with great deference to his hostess—"but I shall have to go now, as well."

Having been already dismissed, King strolled to the door while he completed an elaborate leave-taking and made certain that the girl would remain in case anything else should have been suggested.

"Really," he said on the doorstep, with the outer door shut safely behind them, "it was extraordinary luck that she should take to Lilli that way."

"Partly luck, anyway," King conceded. "What's up with you?"

"With us," he corrected her. "We're being sent to Galway!"

"Oh?" It was her invariable response to surprise, and was both a question and an exclamation as she said it. "I thought that was my dish. You weren't mentioned when Goethal told me about it."

"I know." His voice was a little too careful. "It's an afterthought. We work so well together—" He shrugged.

"I can't imagine anything you could do there that I can't do better," she said crisply. "What's the story?"

"They seem to consider that two minds are better than one."

"One to work and the other to watch? It has a familiar ring." She looked at him accusingly. "You aren't by any chance going in order to make sure that I do the job?"

"What makes you so suspicious?" he evaded.

"Nothing else makes sense," she said simply, "though I'm damned if I know why they should get the wind up about me all of a sudden. You wouldn't have any idea, I suppose?"

"Perhaps, liebchen, I only wanted the trip with you. Would you despise me for that?"

"Hell to your soul, isn't it clear to you that you may as well tell me the truth?"

"Well"—he tried to minimize—"there's been some trouble recently. They're taking extra precautions all around. No one"—he underscored it with his voice—"is to be trusted entirely alone—at least until they have got to the bottom of it."

"You mean there's a leak somewhere? For God's sake, why didn't you say so in the first place?" Immediately she knew why. "You're distrusting me in particular," she accused him. "Here you are treating me like an outsider!"

"Oh, no! Far from that!" he laughed.

Rapidly she began to run over in her mind the members of the consular staff, both regular and occasional. She was the only Irish person in their employ in Dublin.

"We are supposed to leave at once," Streib was saying. "How soon can you be ready?"

"I'm not sure I shall go at all, under the circumstances. If you don't trust me, then I shan't be able to trust you, either, and it'll be a hell of a mess."

"Nonsense. *I* trust you," he protested.

"You lie," she told him unemotionally. "You know a great deal you haven't told me right now."

"Very well. The Irish government has taken a sudden interest in our activities—an unusual interest for a friendly nation in time of peace. Since we have been unable to persuade them, so far, that their interests coincide with ours, it is essential that we maintain absolute secrecy about our plans."

"I know that quite well," she reminded him. "And when have I ever hobnobbed at Dublin Castle?"

"Unfortunately you alone are Irish. And we sometimes find the Irish nature—incalulable." He chose the word thoughtfully.

"If you had any brains," she said angrily, "you'd look where there's money involved. Have I ever taken a pfennig for anything I've done? Nearly everyone else is on the payroll, and if a man is taking money from one source, he can take it from another as well!"

He looked angry now. "A man can earn his living and

still be a patriot. If we pay you nothing, we may ask then who is paying you?"

"You don't need to leave that to doubt. You probably know exactly what my income is and where I derive it. It's certainly no state secret!"

"I'm sorry," he apologized. "Here we are turning on one another just because someone has raised a question. It's all so vicious. Let us forget about it now. We are too good friends for such things."

"Very well," she said, but her voice was reserved. "And now I've a dinner engagement to dress for, so I'll leave you here." She stopped at the corner of the street.

"But I must leave for Galway in the morning, and we've made no plans!" He put a hand on her arm.

"Write me. I'll have to think it over."

"I shall be helpless without you," he protested. "You know that quite well. Let me come to see you tonight? Any time you say."

"I'm not staying in town," she lied. "I'm going out to Greystones."

"Let me come and take you out there, then."

"Oh, very well." She gave in wearily. "Come around to my place. But make it late!" She walked quickly away.

Chapter Fifteen

KING was dressed and waiting when John came for her, and threw herself into his arms the minute he had closed the door. "I wish there was no one in the world but you," she told him wildly. "Do you know what peace you give me?"

"You don't seem very peaceful at the moment," he said.

"I've had a bitchy afternoon. Just hold me!"

"What happened?" He rubbed his cheek against her hair.

"Oh, it went off according to schedule," she said. "Moved like clockwork, in fact. Everything the Germans do is always successful! So bloody perfect it's monotonous. If they ever made a mistake—if they ever had the ordinary bad luck of other people, even! Have you noticed," she asked him, "how fate always seems to conspire with success? Do well, and luck jumps on the bandwagon. But try and find her if you need her! Oh, let's forget about them!"

He suppressed the questions that tumbled into his mind. He even tried to conceal the satisfaction he was

feeling, but there was a happy rise in his voice when he spoke again.

"I've made an amusing discovery," he told her. "There's no divorce in the Irish Free State. Regardless of your religion, if you get married in Eire you're married for good."

"I could have told you that. Typical, isn't it? Call themselves 'Free' state, and then see to it you can never be free!" She drew her head back to look at him. "Do you really love me?" she asked.

"You've never asked me that before," he said. "You don't need to ask, but I'm glad you did. I love you so much it scares me, sometimes."

"I know!" she told him fervently. "But now let's just be peaceful. You make me so divinely contented. I trust you so utterly! And you can't imagine what that's like. You really can't. I don't suppose you've ever had an enemy, darling. And if you had, you'd know it. You'd know exactly who he was, and what he meant, and how to cope with him. It would all be so simple it wouldn't matter."

He knew what she meant. If he couldn't gauge her complexity at least he could guess at it. And it gave him a certain knowledge of his own relative simplicity. He understood better than she knew. But he only said, "Are you ready? I suppose we ought to be pushing off."

On the doorstep she handed him the key. She was carrying nothing in her hands. "You see how implicitly I trust you," she said drolly.

"Lead the way," he told her. "I'm at your mercy in this."

In Grafton Street they turned off, entered a doorway and climbed a flight of stairs.

"Jammet's," she said, "Dublin's inadvertent concession to civilization."

"Is food the criterion?"

"Emphatically. What better?"

"Some people have related it to the position of women," he said, following the waiter across the floor.

"Nonsense! Ireland is a feminine country, and look at her!" She sat down. "Her best men are driven to poetry—in praise of the women who abuse them."

"Some people consider poetry civilized."

She shrugged impatiently. "The swan song of civilization. Shall we order?"

When the waiter had left he glanced around him. The men in the room outnumbered the women. Most of them wore dinner jackets. Some of them, at least, were foreigners, he thought. Just as his eyes were turning back to his own table, they met those of an elderly man at a nearby table of four. The man was getting to his feet. He wasn't looking at John after all, but at Kingsley Blake. Standing, he made her a stiff, military bow. "Fräulein Blake," he said graciously. Immediately his face was a mask again and he resumed his seat. John looked at her inquiringly.

"Pompous old ass," she said lightly. "What did you do all afternoon?"

"Paid my respects to Yeats and Bernard Shaw and Malachi's collar of gold."

"Oh, the museums. You must have been hard up for diversion."

"You have a fine disregard for art, haven't you?" he teased her.

"It's a fetish with most people. I'm honest."

"You don't regard it as decadent, by any chance?"

"But certainly. It is! It's a poor present that has nothing better to do than occupy itself with the past. The Fuehrer is quite right about that."

She had anticipated him and he felt a trifle chagrined.

"I call him Hitler," he said, "when I'm being polite."

She was unperturbed. "You haven't lived in Germany."

"If I had," he retorted, "I don't think I'd ever be polite."

She smiled her most dazzling smile. "No, I don't suppose you would be," she agreed.

A motion beyond King's head attracted his attention, and when he looked to that end of the dining room his glance lighted on Otto Streib sitting at a table beside the wall.

"That German fellow is sitting down there," he told King, "the big one I've seen you with around college."

"Otto? Really? I've never seen him here before."

"I can't be sure," he added, "she's sitting with her back toward me, but it looks like Madame Powers with him."

"You must be mistaken!" King said sharply, after a startled moment. "They don't even know one another!" The waiter brought their soup just then, and John saw that her hand trembled when she picked up her spoon.

"After all," he reminded her, "you didn't know I'd met your grandmother."

"I didn't know you at that time! Besides, it's quite different. She hates the Germans."

"He may be an exception," he suggested, still watching the distant table. "I believe it's she, all right. I'll be sure if she turns her head."

"She doesn't make exceptions," King told him. "She picks her associates, and there's always a damned good reason!"

"It's Madame Powers," he said definitely then, and looked at King again.

"I don't understand it!" She was scowling and dipping into her soup with nervous, preoccupied haste.

"Maybe she has had a change of heart. The feminine prerogative, you know."

She shook her head violently. "Never! She hates them, I tell you! Oh, she doesn't admit it, of course. She threw me into their arms—it was her idea I should do my schooling there—that's one way I know."

"Really, King, I don't understand you," he complained. "All this personal, political hodgepodge! I thought England was her phobia, anyway."

"She despises the English. It's quite different. Besides, that's part of the cause. You've got to rail against

the English if you want to get anywhere with the Irish. But the Germans she hates, and loves! She was married to a German," she finished as though that explained everything.

"Your grandfather?" he asked, surprised.

"No, it was ages before mother was born. He left her," she said exultantly, her face lighting up. "With everyone swooning at her feet, he simply walked out. God, I wish I'd known him!"

"I wish I knew you," he said, speaking out of his thought. The waiter interrupted them to bring the meat and remove their empty soup plates.

"You do, darling," she told him ardently. "You're the only one who does. You're the only person in the world I can trust!"

"What are you worried about?" he asked quietly. "I've seen it ever since we met. There's something you're afraid of—or—"

"I don't know!" she said quickly. "I wish I did. I just know it means no good—their being together. I wish I knew what it means! Oh, God, can't we ever get away from them?"

"We could," he said firmly.

"I'm sorry!" She looked contritely into his anxious, troubled eyes. "Let's forget them. Let's talk about something else."

But when, somewhat later as they were starting on dessert, Madame Powers and the German got up and

left the dining room, they both paused to watch them go.

"I should think," John reflected aloud, "that if Germany could help Ireland—"

King anticipated his conclusion. "That's exactly what Granny doesn't want! Don't you see—it's her whole life. And if you'd fought for something all your life, you wouldn't want someone else coming in to strike the last blow and walk away with the credit. Actually, she doesn't want any blow struck by anyone but Ireland. Preferably in the person of Madame Powers. She'd rather lose than win any other way. After all, she's used to losing. It's a kind of triumph in a way. You probably can't understand it," she finished with a shrug.

"But you can," he said quietly. "You agree with her, really."

"She's insane!" she flared back at him. "She's a megalomaniac. I, on the other hand, am a complete realist. I believe in results and to hell with the credit. We've been licking our wounds and nursing our vanity quite long enough."

He struck a match for her cigarette. "Remember," he said, "we were going to forget them? Let's talk about something else." He took a quick swallow of coffee. "This is the best coffee I've had in Dublin. I'd given up ordering it."

"Exactly. Better stick to tea which the Irish like well enough to have learned how to make. People," she observed with a suddenly relaxed grin, "think of such

brilliant things to say when they're manufacturing conversation."

"Look out," he warned, "you sound like the man who tried to not think of an elephant for forty-five minutes."

"Let's go away right off?" she urged him. "Tomorrow, maybe?"

"Don't know why not," he said, considering it. "Shall I hire a car?"

"I thought maybe—" she began and then stopped. "That would be lovely," she finished instead.

Out in the street once more she took his hand and swung it as they walked. "Let's walk," she suggested. "And then let's go to my place and bolt the door and take the telephone off the hook—" She saw the curious look he turned to her. "It's just that I want you all to myself," she told him. "There's something I want to tell you, darling, something very special and private."

"Of course. You wouldn't rather go to my room, would you?"

Her hand tensed in his. "No one's going to drive me out of my own place," she said angrily. "We'll go there! We'll go there right now!"

It was defiant and he looked at her wonderingly, curious but more disturbed than anything else. Then she laughed.

"How insane," she said lightly. "I'm being melodramatic and Irish. Did you ever know anyone so ridiculous? Have you still got the key? Or did you leave it with the tip? What a plot! The disillusioned lover leaves

the key to his mistress' flat with the first waiter he meets. You go on from there! We used to do this by the hour at school."

Slight as it was, it was the only reference he had ever heard her make to school. She seldom spoke of the past at all. It was almost as if she had no past, and had committed herself to no definable future. She lived entirely in the present. It seemed to him at this moment that it was one of the oddest things about her. But he only said, "It's a lousy plot. I've got a much better one."

"So have I!" She held his arm against her side in a quick, ecstatic pressure. "So have I! Wait till you hear it!"

As soon as they had got into her flat she said, "Don't turn on the lights." She went to the windows and drew down the shades. Then she went into the kitchenette at the back and he heard her drawing the shades there as well. "Let's have some brandy," she called, and he could hear her opening a cupboard.

"I can't see a thing," he complained. "What's it all about?"

"I just don't want to be disturbed," she said matter-of-factly. "If the lights are on it would be only reasonable to answer the door, and I don't intend to do anything of the sort."

"But who do you think is going to come around here at this hour?"

"It's quite early," she said, coming into the room. His

eyes were beginning to get adjusted to the darkness. He could see that she was carrying a decanter.

"Do you mean to say we're going to sit here in the dark all evening? Really, darling—"

"Sit down." She put the decanter on the table by the fireplace. "I love your voice when I can't see you very well," she told him and came to where he still stood. But when she started to embrace him, he took her shoulders in both hands and held her off.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked her sternly. "You've said you trust me."

"I don't know myself. I'd tell you if I did. That's the horrible thing about it," she said tensely, "not knowing! It's like hearing steps behind you and when you turn there's no one there. I don't know whom to trust—and so I can't trust anyone."

"You know a great deal more than you've told me," he said. "That's obvious. Or why all this? You're expecting someone. Who?"

"Yes," she said truthfully. "I'm afraid Otto will come around, and I don't want to see him."

"So far, so good. Why don't you want to see him?"

"I've told you, darling, because I don't trust him! And that's as much as I know. You've got to believe me." She moved away from him and began to move restlessly about the room. "You don't know what it's like," she said. "You've never had to plot and connive for anything. You've never been persecuted."

"That's a strong word," he said mildly. "Why should anyone be persecuting you?"

"There you are!" she pointed out wildly. "You just can't imagine it. But it's my life! I can't escape it any more than I can escape being a woman." She paused and then she sat down across the room from him. "It's rather like that, when you think of it," she said broodingly, and now she was talking to herself, "being a woman or being Irish, or anyone persecuted. Women have always been persecuted too. Don't contradict me," she said quickly. "You're a man. It's always been your world. And did you ever know a man who'd swap?"

"Would you?"

"Of course not! But it's my heritage, and you can't escape that. You can't escape anything that goes with it. But you don't know what I'm talking about," she finished helplessly.

"I'm trying to understand," he said gently, and went over to kneel beside her chair. "What was it you were going to tell me?"

"I'm so confused," she said forlornly. "I don't know what to think any longer." She leaned her head against his. "I was going to ask you to take me away—not to Galway, to America."

"I'm going to. Thank God you want me to at last!"

"But I don't. I mean—I thought I could, darling. Suddenly it all seemed futile and worthless, except you! I thought, if no one even trusted me what was the use? What could I ever do? And then I thought, it's always

been that way with the Irish. Nothing but confusion and distrust, over and over again, generation after generation. No wonder they've accomplished nothing. Only the ones who leave! I thought, after all, the wise ones are the ones who leave. But now it's all come back to me again!" She twisted away from him. "I can't leave! Any more than I can escape being a woman." She repeated it like a dirge.

"But I want you to be a woman," he said urgently. "A complete woman. You're only half-alive. You're like someone under a spell half the time."

"A curse!" she said passionately. "And if I ran away it would always haunt me. Like being a deserter and making yourself safe while all your friends are trapped, and maybe killed. Don't you see that even if I can't help, I've got to stay? Even if it's futile, it's still my fate! And I might help. I still might help!" Some of her customary vigor was returning to her. She sat a trifle straighter in her chair.

"It's only the beginning. This time we might accomplish it!" Her eyes turned to his. "The world's not so very different," she pleaded, "it's a bloody enough mess. But you don't just turn your back on it!"

"So it's me or Ireland, is that it?" he asked her. "Is that what I've been up against?"

"No, no, no!" She reached out and drew his head against her breast. "Don't make me decide like that! I can't give you up. I've told you that. I love you too

much. You're all my delight, darling, and all the peace in the world. I'd go mad without you! Everything else is torment and confusion. I need you, darling. I need you! It's more than wanting you!"

He got up and raised her with him. "I think from here on I'd better do the deciding for both of us. You're going to be a woman and my wife."

They both started at the sharp ringing of the doorbell.

"Don't answer," she said in a quick, hoarse whisper. "Come and lie down with me and we'll cover up our ears until he goes away."

"I'd like to let him in and knock him down!"

"Don't be silly, he's done nothing. It's just that I don't want to see him now. Please come and let's ignore him," she urged again.

The bell sounded twice this time, and immediately again.

"How long is this likely to keep up? Does he expect you to be in? Answer me, King, did he tell you he was coming? Did you say you'd be here?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "yes. I can't lie to you."

"Oh, King, you fool! Let me go and get rid of him for good."

"No, you mustn't. He'll go in a minute. He's bound to. He knew I didn't want to see him. Take me in your arms!"

"You idiot," he said helplessly against her mouth.

"I know," she agreed in a moment, drawing him with her across the room. "I'm mad. You're my only sanity. Oh, darling," she said when they were lying together, "take me with you! Don't listen to me. No matter what I say, take me with you! And soon, darling, soon!"

Chapter Sixteen

"How soon do you think we can get a sailing?" King asked the first thing next morning. John had been half-prepared for her to change her mind. Instead she seemed more determined. At least she was a great deal more impatient. "I might call Jerry," she thought aloud. "They're leaving any day. They might be able to wangle us a place on their boat."

She called him as soon as they had had their tea and John listened, amused, to her sketchy explanation of a step that plainly astonished her brother.

"But I did warn you I might," she protested. "Or did you think I'd made it all up? Anyway, that's all settled," she rushed on, "and don't stop and report it all to Helen now! When are you sailing? Do you think there'd be room for us? A week! Good God!" she exclaimed. And then, "I don't see what seasons have got to do with it. Well, see what you can do, there's a lamb, and call me back. No, on second thought, I'll call you." She turned a dramatic gaze upon John.

"He says they started a week ago making reservations, and then it was sheer luck. It isn't the season, or

something. You'd think the steamship lines were a flock of migratory geese. I never heard of anything so irresponsible!"

He laughed. "Quite the reverse. It's all planned on the basis of business. In the tourist season you can pretty nearly take your pick. I really don't see," he complained mildly, "why you're in such a rush all of a sudden. I'd still like to see the west coast. I've seen nothing but Dublin so far."

"That's out." She dismissed it briefly. "Why don't we go the rounds of the booking offices this morning?" She helped herself from his package of cigarettes.

"That's the third one you've had since breakfast," he reminded her. "What makes you so nervous?"

"I'm simply impatient." She spoke with exaggerated calm. "When I make up my mind, I act, and I loathe this shilly-shallying around! What's the object? Besides, we've lots to do. Have you much stuff to pack?"

He stretched with satisfying thoroughness. "It was Eve, wasn't it, who bustled us out of paradise? And they call this a man's world."

"Where the hell—" she said abstractedly from the depths of the clothes press that served her as a closet. Emerging again, she paused for an instant to regard him. "Why do you just sit there?" she demanded. "Why don't you get ready? We're losing precious time every minute. Oh, darling"—her face softened suddenly and still clutching a dress in one hand, she leaned down to kiss him, her free arm encircling his head—"you'll have

to tell me all about your family," she said tenderly. "Only not now!" She moved quickly away from him again. "But it's so exciting!" She spread the dress on the back of a chair. "I don't see how you can be so phlegmatic. Aren't you at all thrilled? It's what you've said you wanted all along. Or have you changed your mind?" She slipped off her dressing gown while she talked and tossed it on the bed. "Maybe you're getting tired of me already?" She hauled her nightdress off over her head. "Would you like me better if I were coy, darling? I have chased you shamelessly, haven't I? But I never meant to snare you permanently."

"Does that make it more honorable?"

For a minute they looked at each other, and then simultaneously they both burst into laughter. John rocked in his chair, and the tears began to run down King's face. "Oh, God," she said, wiping her eyes, "aren't conventions mad?"

There wasn't a sailing possibility for ten days. Gerald was no use and they methodically checked at every office while King's impatience mounted. She swore continuously and smoked innumerable cigarettes. She was rude to everyone, and especially to John.

"Holy God!" she said more than once. "The irony of it. If I didn't want to go there'd be ten sailings a day. What about Liverpool? We could get over there tonight." Patiently the others went over the entire ground.

"You see," it was explained to her again and again,

"it's the slow season for travel. And then a good many people seem to be leaving Europe just now, so the available boats are full."

"Look here," John said finally over lunch at a restaurant in town, "you're turning into a nervous wreck before my eyes. And it isn't as if you weren't sitting here perfectly equably two days ago. I couldn't sell you the idea. I don't get it!"

"You wouldn't!" With a cigarette in one hand she reached unconsciously for another. "Order me a cocktail," she snapped at him then. He ordered two.

"You might tell me what you're worrying about," he said for possibly the tenth time. "You keep telling me you trust me and you know I only want to help. If you just want to get out of Dublin—if it's something to do with that fellow—we could leave for Cobh tonight and wait over there."

"That's not a bad idea." She considered it, her eyes lighting, the frown smoothing out of her forehead. "Darling!" she said in another minute, "you're wonderful." She reached out and touched his hand. "I've been perfectly bitchy, haven't I? I've got a foul disposition. But I've been so worried. Oh, I'm not worried, really," she contradicted herself quickly. "It's just I'm always changing my mind. And if I don't act on the spur of the moment—and I want to! I want you." The cocktails arrived and she began to drink hers too rapidly. "I don't intend to give you up," she told him. "And it's myself

I don't trust." She paused to finish her cocktail in one gulp. "I'd like another," she said.

"You've eaten nothing," he reminded her, "and this looks like a darned good steak."

She picked up her fork obediently. "Now order me another?" she asked, like a suddenly docile child.

"You'll ruin your complexion," he said. "Alcohol's very dehydrating."

"Prude." She made a face at him. "You just don't like to see me drink and you won't admit it."

"Quite objectively, I find you beautiful. And it's far too rare to be trifled with." He expanded the theme. "I speak as a connoisseur, not as a moralist."

Her eyes mocked him. "Quite objectively! I like you better when you aren't being so jolly objective. A connoisseur, indeed! I suppose you'd really admire me if I were hanging in the National Gallery?"

"Eat up," he advised her. "We've got a lot to do if you really want to get to Cobh tonight."

She became serious again. "I damned well do! Let's look up trains after lunch. I can pack in no time. How about you?" He nodded, his mouth full.

The morning train south had left. There remained only one at seven in the evening. They agreed on an early supper in preference to tea on the train, and he left her for the afternoon.

She had become herself again, serene, confident, even exuberant. With all the enthusiasm she had first put into Galway, she now began to anticipate Cobh. They could

hire a car, or bicycles, and see something of the countryside. They might even rent a boat and fish. With the prospect of Dublin behind her, her spirits rose like a rocket.

When John came for her she was ready and waiting again. "I've even had a nap," she boasted. She looked astonishingly fresh. "But the beastly landlady stuck me for two weeks' rent! She'll pick up another roomer tomorrow, or I'm no judge of my sex. Who cares?" She smiled at him. "The way I feel she could have asked for a month."

"I'm surprised she didn't," he said. At that she roared with laughter.

"She did!" she told him delightedly. "I beat her down. Shall we go?" For a minute before opening the door, she looked at the room and at him. Her expression was both sentimental and amused by her sentiment. Then she leaned over and kissed his mouth. It was neither lingering nor brief. "That's for nothing," she said. "Come on!" She left the door streaming open behind her.

"You finished the brandy," he guessed, and wrinkled his nose distastefully.

"You're jolly right I did. Did you suppose I'd leave it for her nibs?"

"Perhaps I'd better carry that bag before you knock someone out with it." She continued to swing it as she walked.

"There couldn't have been half a pint," she protested.

"You only stink," he told her cheerfully. "On half a pint you couldn't walk."

She leaned her shoulder affectionately against his. "Would you carry me then?"

"I'd drag you. Less of a strain and more degrading."

"How sweet of you to think of my feelings." She squeezed his arm against her side. "Where shall we eat?" she asked sensibly then.

Seated opposite her at the restaurant he marveled again at her freshness, the unshadowed clearness of her eyes, the glow of her skin. "For a drunk you look all right," he said.

"Mr. Payne! I'm not used to such extravagant compliments."

"You've been spoiled. Do you sail, by the way?"

"Darling, I've been planning it, too! We could hire a boat. It's heavenly along the coast. I don't know it the way I know the West, but it would be lovely to explore it together. I wish we had a month! What's the worst that could happen if we should miss the beastly sailing after all?"

He grinned at her. "The next sailing. But this morning you couldn't find one soon enough."

"That's before you were so brilliant about Cobh. Once we've put Dublin behind us I don't care where we are! Temporarily, at least."

"Don't qualify," he said. "I like your crazy enthusiasm." He was amused, too, by her appetite. Now it was she who urged him to eat to spare her the embar-

rassment of outdoing him. She ate ravenously, and with vociferous appreciation. Only when they had finished, her high spirits began to abate a little. He saw it first in her eyes. And when she had finished one cigarette, she began at once on another.

"Let's not hurry," she said. "Let's pretend we have all the time in the world." But she stole a glance at her watch. "Let's not even look ahead," she said surprisingly. "I don't really believe in planning. I'm superstitious or something. Nothing I count on terrifically ever seems to happen."

"But we have all the time in the world," he said. "There's no hurry. I'll just have to stop by the express office—"

"Do you have to?" There was a frown between her eyes.

"But, darling, it won't take a minute. I thought you weren't looking ahead? If you refuse to anticipate, then why worry?"

"You're perfectly right." She smiled at him. "It's stupid, isn't it? To only dread, and never anticipate? That way you're always the loser." She snuffed out her cigarette half-smoked. "Shall we leave now?" She got up before he had a chance to move.

When the cab stopped at the American Express office, she turned to him anxiously. "You will hurry, won't you?" she begged him. "I know I'm being a fool, but please humor me. I always get this way on the verge of anything."

"Yes, of course. I won't be a minute." He was halfway out of his seat.

"And don't look at me that way," she said, "as if after all you don't believe—" Instead of finishing she leaned over and kissed him.

He backed out of the cab. "That's a bad habit if you want me to hurry," he said before turning away.

Returning with his travelers' checks, John stopped abruptly on the steps of the building and looked twice. He thought the first time that it must be another cab standing at the curb where he had left his, with an army officer holding the opened door. But there was no other in sight, and crossing the sidewalk he could see King still sitting where he had left her inside.

She saw him without giving any sign, without moving. She might have been frozen. His original impression of her rushed back to his mind in all its chilling perfection. Only now, if possible, she was colder, more haughty, more utterly aloof.

"I beg your pardon." He touched the officer's elbow. "This lady is waiting for me."

The man turned his head without moving aside from where he stood blocking the door to the cab. "Captain Mulcahy," he said. "Miss Blake knows who I am."

John looked at her for confirmation, for some enlightenment. Her face remained stony. "What's it all about?" he asked.

"The Minister wants to see Miss Blake at the Castle."

"I've told him"—King spoke up at last in a voice of cold fury—"that we are catching a train. If the Minister's business with me is so urgent, surely I might have been told before now? I think it can wait until I get back."

"I'm sorry." The Captain was polite but determined. "My orders are to bring you to Dublin Castle directly."

"But what's it all about?" John demanded again. "Which Minister? I suppose you know what you're talking about, but—"

The man interrupted him with the name of the Minister of Defense. "I'm simply following orders," he repeated. "My car is here. If you will please come along, Miss Blake."

John continued to stare at her expressionless face. There was no time to sort out the questions that flooded his mind, the recollections, the suspicions, the conflicting emotions.

"Well," he said slowly, "I suppose there's nothing else for it. I'll go along with you." He reached into his pocket for change to pay the taxi as he spoke. He glanced at the officer. "I'm sure you've no objections to that."

Before the man could make any answer, with characteristic abruptness King flung herself out of the cab. For an angry second she looked at John. "You might have knocked him down!" she said. John saw that the Captain's face was a mask.

"This way." He directed them to the opposite curb.

In the car King turned to John. "I suppose you think I lied to you," she said. "I suppose you think I expected this and know all about it."

"You expected something." He said it without reproof. "I wish I knew what to think. I wish you'd explain it to me."

"I wish I could! I wish—" She made a futile gesture with both hands and turned away from him just as the car swung into the iron gates and began to bump over the cobblestones that paved the courtyard of Dublin Castle.

Chapter Seventeen

It was a large room into which they were shown by Captain Mulcahy. With a good deal more furniture than it had, it would still be bare. The group of men who turned to survey them as they entered looked lost and a little pathetic under the lofty, illuminated ceiling.

John recognized Tim Leary, and a minute later he saw the Minister for Defense seated at a table apart. The others were strangers. There might have been nineteen or twenty. They had in common a certain shabbiness of apparel, and something more significant that he couldn't immediately place. There was in no face any sign of recognition. Their eyes, even as they rested for a moment on Kingsley Blake, were incurious, seemingly unconcerned. But apathy was not the attitude he sensed. Beneath the assumption of indifference he suspected a wariness. One and all, he believed, were tense with a watchfulness that was more marked for being suppressed.

It occurred to him that no one of them was acknowledging the acquaintance of another. Each seemed to

stand withdrawn, enclosed in a separate silence. Like men in a hostile presence, united by their common suspense, they were secretive of even their unity.

With King he had stopped just inside the door against which the Captain now stood. Across the room another door opened presently and another officer entered to stand with his back to it, facing the room. The Minister raised his eyes now for the first time, and then got to his feet. There was no one present who was not taller than he. For a minute he regarded them. Then, gathering up the papers from the table before him, he walked to a desk that stood at the front of the room on a slightly raised platform.

John glanced at King. They had not spoken since they got out of the car, and as soon as she had entered this room she seemed to have assumed the attitude of these men who watched and waited. She was too quiet, but wholly without repose. She might have gone to stand amongst them, except that to do so would have been an acknowledgment and, like them, she was recognizing nothing.

"Good evening," the Minister said finally. He got no answer and seemed to expect none. The browned fingers of his right hand moved the papers around on the desk. John wondered if he had brought them for that purpose, if they had any other meaning. His left hand dragged at his lapel.

"You are fortunate," he told them rather unctuously, "in having one patriot in your midst. Very fortunate! It

may even be your salvation." He paused and his little eyes shifted from face to face. "That is, of course, entirely up to you." Again he paused. "But," he went on, "if there is any sincerity in your avowed purpose, if you are capable of putting country above party—as one of your members has been—"

"Come to the point!" It was Leary, speaking with unaccustomed forcefulness. There was nothing desultory about him now. "If the others know your meaning, I don't."

The Minister's head jerked back, his eyes widened. "I shouldn't have taken you for a fool, Mr. Leary!" His nostrils flared angrily. "I won't ask you to look around you. I don't think that is necessary. I'll simply ask you if you really suppose it was accident that brought all your friends together here? We are not fools, if you are. Be so good as to consider that, and spare me your pretense." He had dropped both hands to the desk and held on to it now as if to control himself physically.

"I know who I am addressing!" he said loudly. "And I know that you know!" Again he looked around the room, but his original poise was gone now. "You miserable outlaws!" His voice shook with his intensity. "You sneaking murderers! I could have you hanged—hanged as you have hanged others. You ought to go down on your knees and thank God for what you don't deserve."

"You mean, don't you, that we ought to thank you?" Leary's voice mocked him. "Tell us," he urged, "don't

keep us in suspense. What is this boon that you are about to offer?"

"Name your patriot!" Kingsley Blake spoke up. "You must have been ably assisted to make this unerring selection!" Scorn rang in her voice. The Minister whirled to face her.

"I'm coming to you, Miss Blake!" He caught some of her sarcasm. "You'll be very glad to know that you are in a class by yourself. The rest are amateurs in perfidy compared to you!"

"If you can just manage to control yourself"—an older man spoke up—"we are listening."

The Minister's hands shook getting out a handkerchief to pass over his damp face. They waited while he struggled to restore himself to some degree of calm.

"You purport," he began at last, speaking with difficulty, "to desire the freedom of your country above all things. Very well then. You will be happy to know that a petition has been placed before the highest authorities in England for Irish dominion over all Ireland." He stopped, but if he had expected any response he was disappointed. "As guarantee of our good faith," he resumed, "we have promised the complete, the final, the irrevocable dissolution of the revolutionary forces in our midst." His little nod said "yourselves" as clearly as though he had spoken the word.

"I have called you here for your signatures to this solemn pledge. As the leaders, and the potential leaders of your faction, we shall require that."

A profound silence followed his words and weighed them. At last the older man who had most recently spoken stepped slightly forward from the group.

"As you implied earlier," he began quietly, "we are not fools. We doubt if you are, either. Since the object of what you describe as our faction is, has always been, will always be the freedom of Ireland, isn't it obvious that upon realization of that goal, our particular function will have come to an end? I have never before heard of an inevitable sequitur being tendered as exchange. How is it possible that the far from foolish English are willing to make so singular a bargain?" His voice became hard and his words quick. "Name the exchange!" he demanded.

"I said," the Minister parried, "that your dissolution was our guarantee of good faith. I don't think I used the word 'exchange'!"

"Name the exchange!" the other man repeated.

The Minister fumbled amongst his papers. "It is one that any Irishman should agree to," he said. "That no reasonable man could object to. Just—certain assistance, as a free country, mind you—to our neighbor, England."

"Name the assistance!" Leary called out.

"It's hypothetical, really," the Minister belittled, "purely potential. We have certain natural advantages, as a neighbor, as an island—if England should ever find herself in an awkward position—in relation to Europe for example, it would be eminently desirable for her to be able to borrow—not our land, not our men, but

simply our waters. It would be perfectly compatible with our safety, with our national integrity. I can imagine no just or reasonable objection," he finished defensively.

Again there was silence in the room. "How long," Leary spoke up to ask finally, "do you suppose it will be before England is at war? I don't think any of us has any optimistic illusions on that score. If we had," he emphasized it, "we would lose them right now. No, I think it is painfully clear what motivates England in her sudden willingness to consider our interest."

"If she is willing," the older man added. "She has tried to bargain with us before now. In our innocence we have made bargains with her. Have they ever been kept? How can the Irish Government be so mad as to suppose that she has changed? I'm afraid we can only regard this for what it is—another trap! Another slaughter of the innocents. Another martyrdom—"

"You are rather anticipating things, aren't you?" the Minister broke in drily. In this, at any rate, he had scored a point. It seemed to improve his poise. "I think you know," he continued, "that neutrality is Ireland's intention. As it is her only possible position. Anything that would jeopardize that position would be rejected nowhere with more vigor than within the Irish Government."

"That is either the sheerest hypocrisy or the most abysmal folly!" It was Leary again.

A third voice came in, a remarkably powerful voice

for so slight and boyish a figure. "Perhaps the Minister is forgetting that we are already at war, that we have never ceased to be at war. What you choose to pretend are acts of sporadic violence, of wanton outlawry, are acts of war! Continuous, unabated war! And until that war is won the sword shall not sleep in its sheath—nor be turned in another direction!" There was another silence, and then Leary, with a gesture of dismissal, said:

"You have our signatures."

Again the Minister's anger flared. "I have yourselves at any rate!"

"With one notable exception," Kingsley Blake said significantly. "Could it be a coincidence that the distinguished Madame Powers is not present?" The men were watching her. "Perhaps she was detained by business in London?" She left a dramatic pause before adding, "Perhaps you will deliver a message. You might tell her that Ireland can still distinguish between patriotism and a passion for personal power."

"I'm sorry to have to embarrass you, Miss Blake"—the Minister spoke his words with biting precision—"but you are under arrest. You're terribly concerned about the fate of your country, aren't you? But I don't think it would trouble you very greatly if you could get to America." His eyes flickered over John, seemingly for the first time. "No"—he seemed to expand—"I don't think it makes a great deal of difference to you where you are so long as you can carry out the instructions of Berlin. Fortunately, we can put you where that will be impos-

sible." John saw her start at the mention of Berlin. He saw, too, how her eyes went from one door to the other in rapid appraisal.

"I've little doubt," the Minister continued, "that there are others who would more willingly embrace Germany than England. To them I say—and if need be I shall continue to say—the pan is still better than the fire. Only the blindest prejudice could tell you anything else." For the first time he was speaking with complete composure, neither dramatically nor in anger, and without evasion. For the first time he was not unimpressive. "Any country with a history of persecution such as ours is fertile ground for propaganda. We should realize our susceptibility. Behind the blandishments of Germany lie more terrors than even Ireland has ever known."

He paused and the impersonal dignity which for a moment had distinguished him fell away. As though recollecting his audience, he turned again to Kingsley Blake. "It might have occurred to you," he told her contemptuously, "that even if Ireland was for sale, she was not yours to sell!"

Her voice whipped back at him. "Aren't you confusing me with Madame Powers?" There was an ugly smile on her lips. Staring at her John remembered how he had thought that she was never less than beautiful, no matter what she did. It wasn't true. It was far from true at this moment. "She has protected herself admirably at my expense. But I don't happen to fancy the role of red herring. And I don't think others are going to be so

easily fooled." She shot a challenging glance at the group of men whose eyes were turned to her.

The minister looked at them too. "If they are wise," he said, "they will be guided by your example. Fortunately, it is not necessary to rely on Madame Powers' word." He had turned again to King. "She has provided us with ample proof." His hand once more strayed amongst the papers before him. "I have here a letter posted to you late last evening by Otto Streib. In Galway we have Otto Streib, where he went to seduce our wretched peasants to traffic in Diesel oil from our coasts. And where you were going to join him! I have here, as well, the plans for submarine bases off Galway, off Aran —the bases which you object to having offered in honorable exchange for the freedom of your country! You are being very bold, Miss Blake, but you are not being very intelligent. I should have expected better of you. But perhaps you overrate yourself and underestimate us."

John's eyes had not turned from her face throughout the Minister's accusations. He saw her every changing expression, and now he was watching, almost with disbelief, a new look growing in her eyes. Incredible as it seemed, it was a look of undeniable satisfaction. Perhaps, he told himself, it was her only possible resource. With all escape closed to her, she might be resorting to an assumption of triumph in preference to admitting defeat, which he knew would be intolerable to her nature.

She might be doing it to confound her enemies, to deny them satisfaction by snatching it for herself.

The possibility ran through his mind and then began to recede. She was capable of acting, he knew, but this, he believed, was more than pretense. Or if she was putting it on, she was fooling herself with it, for he was certain that she was in earnest, that she was even transported.

He ought by now to have grown used to the speed and violence with which her moods could change. Time and again he had watched it happen, always with a sense of disbelief that anyone could change so wholly in less time than his mind could take it in. In relation to Ireland, especially, the phenomenon had recurred until he should have been incapable of surprise any longer. But it only seemed more preposterous every time. He must have believed it was relative, dependent on his ignorance of her. He must have expected it to go with knowledge, with his understanding of her nature. Now his knowledge began to seem an illusion, a trick of his invention, the shadow of his wish.

The look in her eyes had grown until, when she turned to face him at last, she was radiant with it. In her moments of greatest happiness, of greatest content with him, she had never looked like this.

"You see," she told him, and her voice was charged with emotion, "it had to be this way!" If she had arranged the meeting herself, if she had plotted her own arrest, she couldn't have accepted it more wholly.

"But don't you see," he fairly shouted, "that your grandmother has won? It's all her doing, and she's won. You've fallen into her trap!"

"Completely." She agreed with him so calmly that his anger and confusion mounted. The knowledge was here already, and failed entirely to alter her mood.

"She's put me where I can never leave now. She knew it would work that way. She knew I couldn't resist it, and then I could never escape. Martyrdom!" Her voice gloated over the word. "The curse and glory of my country! I had to know it, don't you see? I had to suffer it, too. She was perfectly right!" Her eyes glowed, looking beyond him. It was as if she had left him already. "I accept it," she half whispered. "I embrace it with all my heart."

"But what will you do?" His mind caught and clung to one tangible fact. "Will they imprison you?"

She nodded her head. The prospect seemed to exalt her beyond the power of speech.

"But what about me?" he asked desperately. "I'm in love with you, King!"

At that her eyes focused on him again. "My darling," she said, but with more tenderness than passion. "I love you more than anyone in the world." She moved to stand beside him but without raising a hand to touch him. "Surely you know that now?" Her eyes searched his. "Surely it's clear to you now what you were up against? What I was up against? It isn't personal. It's not a question of you and me. Oh, darling, no one else could even

have tempted me! Don't you see? Even now—if it were possible—if the decision hadn't been made for me—" But her words seemed to him like an echo, without conviction any longer, only the stress of her language was habitual. "I shall hunger for you," she said, and while the word stabbed him with a violence of meaning, he thought that it had become a symbol for her. He himself had become a symbol, the price she was paying, an aspect of her martyrdom, already beyond her acute experience in which he had ceased to share.

"How long—" he began, making a final, hopeless appeal. "I could wait—"

"I don't know." She ignored his suggestion. "It doesn't matter, you see, because this is my life. My life," she repeated with inescapable intent.

He was oblivious of the room and the men in it. It was nothing external that prevented him from taking her into his arms. He stood almost brushing against her with his hands helpless at his sides. "I never gave you peace," he said bitterly. "Your enemies have given you that."

"Mr. Payne, I believe?" It was the Minister making belated acknowledgment of his presence. "If you are escorting Miss Blake, may I suggest that your responsibility has come to an end?"

Without looking at the man, John turned and left the room, with the image of Kingsley Blake's remote and ecstatic face still burning in his brain.

Begun on the campus of Trinity College in Dublin, climaxed in the Ministry of Defense, this is a poignant story of love growing amidst hate—the portrait of a woman intolerant, passionate, brilliant, and yet just beginning to find her real growth and development.

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